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INDUSTRIALIZATION AND THE POLITICS OF DISORDER :

PATERSON SILKWORKERS 1880-1913

JAMES D. OSBORNE

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Introduction	i
Chapter 1 : Silk : A New Industry	1
Chapter 2 : The Experience of Industrialization	19
Chapter 3 : Organization and Resistance	76
Chapter 4 : Industrial Crisis	137
Chapter 5 : New Immigrants	173
Chapter 6 : The Politics of Municipal Reform	233
Chapter 7 : War in Paterson	277
Bibliography	337
Appendices	

## ABSTRACT

This is an account of the social and work experience of successive generations of immigrants in a mushrooming industrial city, Paterson, New Jersey, 1880-1915. In the late nineteenth century the city became the centre of the American silk industry. Its economy flourished, dominated by the production of this one product. Its mills and machinery were technologically the most advanced of any in the world.

Paterson quickly became a Mecca for immigrant silk hands. Their adaption to the new work routines in the city's mills forms the focal point of this study. Immigrant workers brought with them work and collective traditions coloured by their experience in the silk industries of their homelands. They were ill-suited to the advanced form of production in Paterson mills and constantly disrupted the plans of local factory owners. The resultant tension became an ingrained feature of industrial life in the city as a continuous stream of immigrants re-enforced the disruptive tendencies of their predecessors in the mills.

Paterson millowners were so hidebound by their wayward workers that by the end of the century they formed concerted plans to assume a new dominance over the economic fortunes of the city. Their campaign was directed primarily against Paterson's newest immigrant group, Italian millhands. It assumed a distinctive flavour from that fact. In 1913 the new stance of millowners culminated in the notorious "War in Paterson". Although the 1913 strike is commonly attributed to the inflammatory presence of the Industrial Workers of the World, it was rooted in tensions wholly independent of that organization. The failure of the strike confirmed the new social and political status of Paterson's factory owners, and the eclipse of a long tradition of collective disruption by the city's immigrant millworkers.

## INTRODUCTION

Paterson, New Jersey was conceived as a manufacturing centre. Its founder was Alexander Hamilton, George Washington's first Secretary of the Treasury. Hamilton, anxious that the new republic be free from the economic stranglehold of Britain, proposed the growth of native industries. In casting about for an industrial location he seized upon the Passaic Falls in northeastern New Jersey, where the might of the Passaic River could be harnessed to turn the wheels of American industry. Hamilton founded the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures to fund and develop the area. The poet William Carlos Williams depicted Hamilton's grandiose schemes for the site:

"Paterson he wished to make capital of the country because there was waterpower there which to his time and mind seemed colossal. And so he organized a company to hold the land thereabouts, with dams and sluices .... His company. His United States. Hamiltonia - the land of the company". I

During the 1790's and early nineteenth century the Society constructed canals and raceways from the river, built mills and houses for operatives. It imported skilled hands and machinery from England. Within a short time Paterson was a busy hive of industrial activity.<sup>2</sup>

The history of Paterson is the growth of this small manufacturing village into a leading U.S. industrial city. It is not a story of untrammelled progress; indeed "Hamiltonia - the land of the company" often seemed threatened with decline and extinction. Cotton manufacturing, the city's earliest specialization, suffered many setbacks before steadily declining in the 1840's. Iron and locomotive production superseded cotton from the mid-nineteenth century but likewise declined rapidly from the 1870's. Only the expansion of the silk industry during and after the Civil War seemed to assure the future growth of Paterson.

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I W.C. Williams In the American Grain (London 1971) pp. 199-200.

2 B. Mitchell Alexander Hamilton: The National Adventure 1788-1804 (New York 1962) pp. 181-198.



Silk manufacturing heralded the city's emergence as a major industrial centre. Moreover the new industry signalled a dramatic and unprecedented change in the lives of Paterson's inhabitants. Although traditionally a manufacturing site the scale and nature of the silk industry transformed the small town. In 1840 Paterson inhabitants numbered a mere seven thousand five hundred. Thirty years later, stimulated by the labor demands of locomotive and silk producers, population rose to over thirty three thousand. Industrial and residential development mushroomed. Paterson was soon to be numbered amongst the nation's leading manufacturing cities.<sup>1</sup>

Other aspects of this dramatic change are not so readily qualified. In the early nineteenth century Paterson, despite its industry, was pictured at the heart of a rural Arcadia. The poet Thomas Ward could walk from Paterson into virgin countryside where:

"Bees buzzed and wrens that thronged the rushes,  
Poured round incessant twittering gushes;  
While thousand reeds whereon they hung,  
Bent with the weight of nests and young.  
Like a huge bear, alone and still,  
Crouched on the meadow, lay Snake Hill,  
Shaggy with bushy forest-hair,  
Wild as the savage left it there."<sup>2</sup>

Even on the eve of Paterson's industrial boom an observer described the city as "hitherto almost isolated", its rural and unspoiled landscape possessed of "a romantic character" and "peculiar charm".<sup>3</sup>

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I C. Shriner Paterson, New Jersey: Its Advantages For Manufacturing and Residence, Its Industries, Prominent Men, Banks, Schools, Churches etc. (Paterson 1890) pp. 120

2 Flaccus (pseud.) Passaic: A group of Poems Touching That River (n.p.n.d.)

3 New York Times July 24th 1870.

With intensive economic development after the Civil War the picture of "unspoiled" Paterson would soon appear fanciful. Within a few years the city displayed the worst features of industrial life: bad housing, inadequate sanitation and municipal services, poor working conditions along with the characteristic social problems which accompanied them. Even the Passaic River, once the glory of Paterson, degenerated into "the vilest swillhole in christendom".<sup>1</sup>

Although this study takes as its starting-point the emergence of Paterson as an important industrial centre, its direct concern is not with the environmental, urban or even demographic aspects of industrialization. For one thing all have received extensive coverage in recent U.S. social history.<sup>2</sup> Secondly this study focuses upon a limited area of industrialization in an American city. Principally it is concerned with the working class response to the new way of life implicit in industrialization. Larger questions concerning the urban or demographic impact of industrial growth receive attention only insofar as they directly intrude upon the specialized focus of this story.

Two questions form the basis of this study. Although they are not stated explicitly in the text they remain a guiding motif throughout. One: what are the determinants of working class power in a nineteenth century industrial city such as Paterson? The second is in a sense derivative from the first: What are the determinants of violence as a form of this power? Both questions are suggested by the nature of industrial society in the United States, and in particular by the apparent weakness of a class conscious and organized labor movement in the period 1870-1920. What, in the character of U.S. industrialization, gave rise to frequent bitter and violent industrial upheavals but undermined the emergence of a "mature" labor movement?

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1 Williams In The American Grain p. 199

2 For a summary of recent research in U.S. urban history see H.P. Chudacoff The Evolution of American Urban Society (Englewood Cliffs, 1975)



Obviously this study is limited by its specificity to Paterson, The merits and disadvantages of this order of specialization are well known and need no reiteration here. Nevertheless it should be stated clearly that this is not a social history of Paterson per se.<sup>1</sup> The city has been selected because it appeared to reflect features common to cities in industrializing America. Most importantly, perhaps even to an exaggerated extent, Paterson possessed a weak organized labor movement alongside a vibrant and ongoing tradition of industrial upheaval and disorder.

Unfortunately my research was limited by a paucity of funding perhaps common to students of "foreign" lands. A longer sojourn in the United States would surely have permitted more intensive exploration. However it is not clear that further research would have yielded startling new sources. Few unknown or unpublished materials were discovered, whether municipal, business or workingmen's records. Instead this work was founded upon the sources common to much social history. Its findings rest upon the contemporary press and statistical compilations not only because these were, in the main, the only materials at hand but, more importantly, proved the most rewarding even when other sources were available.

In the main I have adhered to "English" spelling throughout the text apart from key words, phrases and colloquialisms where the "American" version seemed more appropriate.

Thanks are due to the Social Science Research Council for funding much of this project and to the New Jersey Historical Commission for a research award which proved essential. The late Sol Walkowitz and D. Walkowitz deserve special mention. Their generous advice and assistance made possible an extended stay in the U.S. The staff of several libraries did their best to cope with my requests, including those at the Paterson Public Library, the New Jersey Collection of Rutgers University, the Tamiment Institute New York University, the Labadie Collection at Ann Arbor Michigan, and the Wisconsin State Historical Society. M. Snow kindly

1. Christopher Norwood, ABOUT PATERSON: THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF AN AMERICAN CITY (NEW YORK) (1974)

assisted with the statistical material. The staff and students at Warwick University's Centre For The Study of Social History provided a stimulating environment. I have benefitted from the supervision of Dr. J. Winter. Dr. A. Mason proved a searching critic of the manuscript. A series of U.S. visitors to Warwick provided guidance and support. Professor David Brody directed my initial research and throughout remained a stimulating critic. Professor Joseph Conlin provided invaluable assistance and encouragement with all aspects of this work. Professor Harvey Levenstein read the manuscript and suggested important improvements. Finally, Professor Royden Harrison provided interest, support and unfailing encouragement for longer than I dare recall.

## Chapter One

### SILK: A NEW INDUSTRY

The U.S. silk industry and the city of Paterson became almost synonymous in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Overnight silk production transformed the local economy, until by the end of the century Paterson was effectively dominated by this single industry. The growth of silk manufacturing was, by any standards, impressive. It was called an industrial "romance", testimony to native skill and ingenuity.<sup>1</sup>

Such praise was not entirely divorced from reality. The American industry developed characteristics which distinguished it from European counterparts. U.S. silk manufacturers consciously strove to pioneer new forms of work organization and new production techniques. In doing so, they fashioned an industry remarkably advanced by the standards of the Old World. It was this industry and its distinctive unit, the factory, which shaped the development of Paterson during the Gilded Age.

In a speech at the annual dinner of the Paterson Board of Trade in 1876, a local manufacturer optimistically asserted that the "...success of the city depended solely upon the success of its manufactures". Despite economic depression, he continued, the expansion of the silk industry has "...helped bridge over the chasm of dull times". Such a contribution in the face of adversity, he claimed, demanded encouragement from the whole community. He ended his address with a rousing appeal: "It

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<sup>1</sup>New York Daily Tribune September 25 1880.



was time to make this city bear the same relation in point of importance to other parts of America, that Manchester and Leeds did to Great Britain".<sup>1</sup>

The prodigious expansion of silk manufacturing in Paterson in the three decades following the Civil War seemed to substantiate local boosters' claims. Within twenty years Paterson became one of the nation's leading industrial cities. Although cotton and locomotive manufacturing rapidly declined during the Gilded Age, the city's economic base was more than amply refurbished by its flourishing silk industry and textile machinery trades. Paterson was "Lyons of America" and "Silk City".

In 1870 Paterson was a flourishing, but hardly a major, industrial city. It numbered just over 33,000 inhabitants. Although the city had expanded considerably during the previous decade - its economy stimulated by the demands of the Civil War - more pronounced growth was yet to come. For by 1890 Paterson boasted over 78,000 inhabitants, and ten years later more than 105,000 (Table 1).

Expansion of this order was perhaps typical of a host of Gilded Age cities. It was remarkable in Paterson for only one reason: the extent to which it was founded upon the growth of silk production. So long as the city's silk industry seemed to prosper, the city expanded, despite the decline and disappearance of older industries and the failure of other new rivals to appear. Paterson's transportation system, commercial activity, and professional life all revolved around this one industry. Even where older industries survived they did so by adapting to

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<sup>1</sup>Board of Trade, Paterson N.J. Third Annual Report 1876  
(Paterson, 1876) pp. 81-82.

Table 1

Paterson Population 1850-1900

	<u>No. of Inhabitants</u>	<u>Rate of Expansion</u>
1850	11,344	
1860	19,586	42%
1870	33,579	71%
1880	51,031	52%
1890	78,347	53%
1900	105,171	34%

(Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Tenth Census of the U.S. 1880 (Washington, 1884) XVIII pp.721, Eleventh Census of the U.S. 1890 (Washington, 1895) XV pp.240, Twelfth Census of the U.S. 1900 (Washington, 1901) I pp.628-629, 436.)

Table 2

Paterson Silk Industry 1860-1900 (includes Dyeing)

	<u>No. of Establishments</u>	<u>Nos. Employed</u>
1860	9	716
1870	27	2,551
1880	92	10,448
1890	112	12,862
1900	166	18,650

(Source: Ninth Census of the U.S. 1870 (Washington, 1872) III pp. 624, Tenth Census of the U.S. 1880 II pp. 430-431, Eleventh Census of the U.S. 1890 XII pp. 422-423, 426-429, Twelfth Census of the U.S. 1900 IX pp.206-08.

a local economy dominated by the manufacture of silk. Cotton producers, although decreasingly important, switched to the manufacture of mixed textiles - cotton and silk. More importantly, the city's machine shops, once ancillaries to locomotive and iron producers in Paterson, now took to producing textile machinery for the city's silk mills. Only a jute mill, a flax manufacturer, a few local breweries, and two shirt factories remained outside the orbit of Paterson's silk manufacturers by the end of the nineteenth century.

Silk manufacture was introduced to Paterson in 1840 by a young immigrant silkworker from Macclesfield, John Ryle.<sup>1</sup> Although Ryle's personal business prospered, the city did not attract a significant number of silk manufacturers until the time of the civil war. Then, almost overnight, Paterson became the unrivalled centre of the nation's fledgling silk industry. Major producers in New York, Connecticut and New England transferred their operations to the city.

Native businessmen were augmented by an exodus of silk manufacturers from England, France, Germany and Switzerland. These Europeans were undoubtedly the greatest source of new entrants to the industry. Men such as Catholina Lambert, Jacob Weidmann and Jerome Vacher fled unfavourable conditions in their homelands to find that in the United States their skill and technical expertise would ensure them healthy profits. In

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<sup>1</sup>C. Shriner Paterson, New Jersey: Its Advantages, for Manufacturing and Residence, Its Industries, Prominent men, Banks, Schools, Churches etc. (Paterson, 1890) pp.27.



the 1860s and 1870s British manufacturers emigrated en masse to Paterson, bringing plant and workers with them. Even the Swiss dyer Weidmann, who maintained substantial investments in Europe, was not unusual in opening new factories in the United States. As late as the 1890s European manufacturers were still arriving in Paterson to invest in new plant.<sup>1</sup>

Paterson proved a desirable location to such newcomers, possessing several unique and endearing features. The Passaic River, on the banks of which Paterson was built, was not least of these. Plentiful supplies of water were essential to the preparation and dyeing of silk. Additionally, as a longtime industrial location, Paterson was already equipped with manufacturing facilities. The decline of cotton manufacture left ample mill buildings for sale or rent. Three major railway lines served the city, linking it with New York, Philadelphia and other major commercial centres on the Eastern seaboard. In 1870 Paterson's transport network was still in the process of completion, bringing "...this hitherto isolated city...in close proximity with the rest of the world". Twenty years later more than fifty trains were daily stopping in Paterson.<sup>2</sup> Proximity to New York, the nation's major port of entry for raw silk, was a further boon. Whilst Paterson lacked the high taxes and rents of the Eastern metropolis transport costs for hauling imported silk the sixteen miles from New York to Paterson

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<sup>1</sup>W.C. Wyckoff American Silk Manufacture (New York, 1887) pp.37, 42-43, Paterson Dry Goods Bulletin Handbook of the Silk Manufacturers, Dealers, Dyers and Others Interested in the Silk Trade of Paterson, New Jersey (Paterson, 1881) - hereafter Dry Goods Bulletin. American Silk Journal January, February and July 1890.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times July 24 1870, Shriner Paterson pp.120.

can hardly have discouraged prospective millowners. Similarly silk products from Paterson factories were easily available to the fashion centres of New York and Philadelphia. Last, but not unimportant, Paterson was already home to a labour pool to man new looms. The wives and children of locomotive workers and machinists proved ideal for many of the tasks involved in silk production. With the decline of cotton production they could be expected to be favourably disposed to new work opportunities. Where skilled hands were required, Paterson's silk manufacturers could import or even bring them along. Their contacts with European silk centres and the cheapness of transatlantic passage both favoured the migration of European silk hands to the city.

Favourable conditions within the city certainly explain Paterson's early pre-eminence as the centre of the U.S. silk industry. In turn the industry fostered the growth of the city as a major industrial centre. Yet the industry as a whole made a relatively late appearance on the American industrial scene; and not without good reason. European centres of silk production all pre-dated the emergence of the industrial system and the new methods of production and social relationships associated with an industrial society. In America, on the contrary, silk was a factory industry from its outset. Paterson was a herald of industrial society. This seeming contradiction can only be explained in relation to the specific conditions which fostered the emergence of the industry in the United States. The unusual relationship to its competitors elsewhere produced features peculiar to the American industry. These characteristics were at the heart of the early success of the industry.



Silk weaving in America lacked the indigenous roots of much European production. The cultivation of silk works never flourished in the New World despite sustained attempts to encourage it dating from colonial times. No handicraft industry of any importance emerged. The nation was thus dependent on imports of finished goods, and any emergent industry on imported raw silk. The stimulus given to silk production following the Civil War is largely attributable to the protective tariff. Duties on imported silk, first adopted in the 1860s, were crucial to both the growth and continued prosperity of the industry.<sup>1</sup> Tariffs adopted by successive administrations continued to protect the industry.<sup>2</sup> Cheap foreign labor and the superior qualities of European silks were early seen as threats to both American manufacturers and their operatives. During the 1870s' depression Paterson weavers were actively petitioning Congress for tariff adjustments to protect their industry.<sup>3</sup> As late as 1900, long after American manufacturers were confident of their ability to produce silk of equal quality and price as their European competitors, they were still fully cognizant of the role protection played in this competitive balance.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the least tinkering with tariff schedules would send deputations of Paterson's silk manufacturers scurrying to Washington.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Wyckoff American Silk Manufacture pp.41, E.C. Kirkland Industry Comes of Age (N.Y.) 1961), pp.165, 189.

<sup>2</sup>F.W. Taussig The Tariff History of the United States (New York, 1930) pp.337-9, 388-90, 436-439.

<sup>3</sup>New York Times January 16 1874, Paterson Daily Guardian December 9 1893.

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Industrial Commission Reports on the Relations and Conditions of Capital and Labor 1900 (Washington, 1901) XIV pp. 700, 703, 706 - hereafter Ind.Comm. 1900.

<sup>5</sup>Silk Association of America Thirty Ninth Annual Report (New York, 1911) pp.22-23.

Important as the tariff was the American silk industry received succour from other sources. Supplies of raw silk were limited until the mid-nineteenth century. Italian silk, the staple of the European industry, was not readily available in the U.S. French and British manufacturers captured the cream of the Italian harvest, leaving only the inferior silks to their competitors. From the mid-century new sources of raw material came on to the market, however, principally from China, and later from Japan. The "revolution" in ocean transport made them accessible whilst preventing shipping costs becoming prohibitive.<sup>1</sup> By the 1870s imports from the Orient could reach Paterson's mills via San Francisco and the transcontinental railroad, or from the port of New York via the Suez Canal.<sup>2</sup> Far Eastern sources increasingly dominated imports of raw silk into America. By 1900 China and Japan supplied 80% of the raw material consumed by American silk manufacturers.<sup>3</sup> Oriental silk was generally inferior to the European varieties, but it suited the needs of American manufacturers and the demands of the American public. More importantly an alternative supply prevented European manufacturers from contemplating strangling American competitors by monopolizing the purchase of Europe's best silks. The importance of this independence from European suppliers was underlined in the 1880s when disease amongst Italian silk worms seriously curtailed European production of raw silk.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kirkland Industry Comes of Age pp.296-297.

<sup>2</sup> M. Garber "The Silk Industry of Paterson, N.J. 1840-1913: Technology and the Origins, Development and Changes in an Industry" (Ph.D dissertation, Rutgers University, 1968) pp.111-114, V.S. Clark History of Manufactures in the United States (N.Y. 1929) p.449, Wyckoff American Silk Manufacture p.47.

<sup>3</sup> Silk Association of America Twenty Ninth Annual Report (N.Y. 1901) p.95.

<sup>4</sup> C.M. Cippola The Fontana Economic History of Europe: The Emergence of Industrial Societies (London, 1973) pp.289-290.



Even with plentiful supplies of raw materials, however, American silk manufacturers found that the growth and prosperity of their industry was not guaranteed. Fortunately for them, circumstances in the latter half of the century favoured them. The American consumer market was the largest in the world for silk goods. Dresses, handkerchiefs, hat bands, ribbons, umbrellas and a host of silk trimmed goods were all demanded in ever increasing quantities. European silks had traditionally dominated this market. European suppliers, with generations of expertise, access to the best sources of raw silk, cheaper labor costs and a hold on the American market, possessed clear advantages over their American counterparts. Competition was fierce and the tariff provided only partial protection to American manufacturers. But other factors favoured U.S. silk producers. The rapid decline of the British silk industry following the Cobden Treaty of 1860, and the disruption of French production by the Franco-Prussian War and later by inadequate supplies of raw silk from Italy, enabled native manufacturers to break the hold of Europeans on the American market, just as it induced Old World concerns to re-locate in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> More importantly, American producers based their industry upon factory production and technical progress. By pressing relentlessly for innovations in advance of their European rivals, American millowners eventually captured control of the expanding home market.

Mechanization was the key to the success of American silk manufacturers. As in so many industries, it was only by

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<sup>1</sup>Clark History of Manufactures pp.449-452.



mechanized production and higher productivity than European rivals that U.S. manufacturers could produce silk of competitive price and quality. For only by higher productivity could they offset the cheaper labor costs of European producers. Indeed, in those branches of the industry where mechanized production was absent or retarded American silk manufacturers did not even attempt to compete, such was their dependence upon technological advances. Silk reeling, the preparation of silk from cocoons, was uncommon in the U.S. because American producers could not compete with the cheap female and child labor of Italy and the Orient; the raw silk Paterson imported was already reeled. Similarly, handloom weaving was never very extensive in America. Some immigrant weavers in Paterson tried to continue working by the traditional methods, and occasionally a small firm specializing in high grade silks would employ handlooms; but they were, on the whole, exceptional. Everywhere in America the powerloom predominated.<sup>1</sup>

Dependence upon mechanized production limited American producers in the range of goods they could produce. High grade goods requiring skilled handloom weaving were uncommon in American silk factories. Similarly the cheapest silks were not manufactured because of the high cost of labor in the United States. Manufacturers concentrated on medium grade silks, the staple of the American market.<sup>2</sup> While they were unable to build an export

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<sup>1</sup>F.R. Mason "The American Silk Industry and the Tariff" American Economic Association Quarterly Series 3, II December 1910 pp.12-13, R.C. Rawlley Economics of the Silk Industry (London, 1919) pp.77, 96-97. Eleventh Census of the U.S. 1890 XIII pp.221-222.

<sup>2</sup>Mason "The American Silk Industry" pp.118-122.

trade for their product, in the 1870s and 1880s this scarcely seemed a drawback.<sup>1</sup> American silk manufacturers were pre-occupied with the struggle to win the home market from foreign competitors. A good deal of snobbery in favour of European silks existed amongst American consumers.<sup>2</sup> Native producers had to prove their silks were of comparable price and quality before public approval was granted. Initially they were able to compete with Europeans only in silk braids, trimmings and ribbons, but gradually their portion of the market increased and their range of goods was widened to include all medium range silks. As a consequence the quantity of home products grew enormously.

In 1860 American mills were producing silk with an annual value of less than \$4 million. Twenty years later the figure was \$34½ million, and by 1900 \$92½ million. European imports for the same period remained static, at roughly \$30 million per annum. Thus from supplying a mere 20% of home consumption in 1860, American silk mills provided almost 85% by the end of the century.<sup>3</sup>

It was an impressive achievement and American silk manufacturers did not hesitate to congratulate themselves. Nor were they short on explanations for the growth of the industry. Mechanization, they felt, was the basis of their ability to compete with European rivals. In Britain, France and Germany silk was a predominantly artisan and handicraft industry. It was based upon home-work and primitive forms of production until

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<sup>1</sup>Ind.Comm. 1900 XIV p.703.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times November 9 1873.

<sup>3</sup>Clark History of Manufactures pp.118-12, 451-453. Mason "The American Silk Industry" pp.5-6.



late in the nineteenth century. Nowhere in Europe was the industry a pioneer of mechanized, factory production. Everywhere it lagged behind other textiles in adapting to the new modes of industrial society. Only in the throwing of silk had extensive factorization taken place, and this was untypical of the industry as a whole. Until the mid-century and after the handloom predominated in the weaving of silk. Home work, organized around the master and journeyman weavers consequently characterized much of the industry. Weaving in factories was not only uncommon but actively resisted by handloom workers. Even after the appearance of the powerloom European silk centres only slowly adopted mechanized production under factory rooves. In America, factory organization and the powerloom were taken up from the outset. The contrast between the U.S. and European industry was striking. An English visitor to Paterson in 1883 remarked:

"There are differences between the methods of manufacture adopted in the States and those in vogue here. Anyone who has visited Macclesfield, Leek, Congleton and Coventry would see many evidences of much of the work being done at the house of the operative. In Paterson and Connecticut, where the silk industry is also carried on, all the work is done at the mill.

This work at home is carried on by hand looms, while at the American mills steam power is used in every instance". 1

Mechanized production was fundamental to the success of American silk manufacturers because by raising output per weaver it enabled them to compete with the cheaper labor costs abroad. Moreover in the early years of the industry U.S. manufacturers

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<sup>1</sup> T. Greenwood A Tour of the United States: Out and Home in Six Weeks (London, 1883) pp.139.

lacked a workforce sufficiently skilled to man a handloom industry. The powerloom reduced much of the skill requirement; and with the assistance of a healthy immigration of European weavers American manufacturers were able to overcome their problem of labor supply. America's position at the forefront of technological innovation in the industry clearly impressed itself upon native observers. "Our countrymen have been much more prompt than Europeans in this matter", one remarked, "substituting steam-driven machinery for the handloom upon each new kind of goods as fast as they were demanded".<sup>1</sup>

The mechanized loom was the fulcrum, and the factory the basic unit of production in America. U.S. millowners strove to integrate the manufacturing process, from importing raw and reeled silk to turning out finished goods. In the more traditional industry of Europe each stage of production was separated, and often completed by different firms working on a commission basis from a silk merchant. Thus silk would be reeled and wound, twisted and doubled in factories and returned to the merchant. He would parcel it out to be dyed, receive it back before contracting it out to be woven. "He has no factory and no machinery", an American observer noted in characterizing the typical European manufacturer.<sup>2</sup>

In America the whole manufacturing process was likely to take place within one establishment." In several of the Paterson mills", an English visitor remarked, "all the different processes are conducted under a single roof, so that the raw silk becomes

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<sup>1</sup>W.C. Wyckoff The Silk Goods of America: A Brief Account of the Recent Improvement and Advances of Silk-Manufacture in the United States (New York, 1879) p.8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p.29.



finished goods before it leaves the place".<sup>1</sup> Although silk throwsters, working on a commission basis, often appeared in the early years of American silk manufacture they had all but disappeared as a separate branch of the industry by the end of the century. Silk dyeing requiring much skill and experience, always remained a separate branch of the industry, although some of the larger Paterson firms had their own dyehouses.<sup>2</sup>

At the point of production the weaving of silk was profoundly altered by the power loom and factory organization. In Europe the handloom worker performed many tasks besides actually weaving, more often than not requiring assistance from other members of his household. Preparing the loom and silk for weaving were the artisan weavers' task. Warping, quilling, twisting-in and loom-fixing were usually performed by the handworker prior to weaving, and after he would pick the finished goods to remove waste particles and flaws. In America all these tasks were divided and a separate class of workers employed for each.<sup>3</sup> Such a work process was not only to give the American industry its distinctive features but also to radically alter the relationship of the worker to his labor. As powerlooms were improved and perfected weaving increasingly became little more than machine-tending, the tedium abating only when the machine or silk proved inadequate. The pace of work was dictated by the loom not the operative, and the weaver a cog in a much larger machine - the factory and its integrated system of production.

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<sup>1</sup>Greenwood A Tour of the United States p.141.

<sup>2</sup>Dry Goods Bulletin p.35, Industrial Commission 1900 XIV pp.672, 700.

<sup>3</sup>Wyckoff The Silk Goods of America p.27,

Concern constantly to improve mechanization prompted a series of important inventions in various branches of the industry which kept American millowners one step ahead of their European competitors. Throwing and winding were greatly speeded up as was silk warping. Moreover powerlooms were constantly improved, and in 1889 an automatic, high-speed ribbon loom introduced in the one branch of the industry that lagged behind in machinery.<sup>1</sup> Moreover the demands of millowners for improvements stimulated the ancillary industry of machine-making. Much of the machinery in the early silk mills had to be imported or was brought over the Atlantic by immigrant manufacturers. But it did not take long for native machine producers to respond to the new situation.

Machine plants had long existed in Paterson, feeding the older cotton and locomotive industries. They quickly adapted to the demands from silk producers. Within a decade they were supplying the entire industry with machinery and forging ahead with the latest innovations in the mechanization of the industry. As one Paterson machine builder claimed: "All kinds of looms have been tried in our silk factories - English, French, German, Swiss etc. - but the best and most effective are those made at home, and constructed according to ideas that have emanated from the minds of men who are practically familiar with silk weaving".<sup>2</sup> Technological advance was crucial to the continued competitiveness of the industry. The growth of machine building coupled with a string of inventions preserved the American

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<sup>1</sup>Clark History of Manufactures pp.453-4.

<sup>2</sup>Dry Goods Bulletin pp.49, 19-20, 51, Industrial Comm. 1900 XIV p.704.



industry's position in the forefront of mechanized production. By the end of the nineteenth century American silk machine builders were exporting their looms to Europe.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of technological advance to the continued expansion of the industry was clearly recognized by American silk manufacturers. Only by mechanized production could they compete with the cheaper labor costs of their European rivals. Paterson millowners explained:

"Our people have a genius for improving machinery, and it has made itself felt in the manufacture of silk goods. We have introduced power looms in all descriptions of work, and because of our rapidity of production we have been able to compete with the cheap labor of Europe, who invariably use slow hand looms.

Because labor is high here our manufacturers must use the best raw material and such improved machinery as will turn out the greatest amount of goods in the shortest time. The American idea is to substitute machinery for manual labor, and that is the main reason why our manufacturers can sell dress silks at a profit." <sup>2</sup>

The "American idea" certainly seemed to pay dividends. The struggle against European imports was in the long term successful. By the 1880s a combination of tariff protection and continuous technological advance enabled American millowners to capture almost all of the home market for silk. The resultant expansion of the industry was prodigious.

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<sup>1</sup>Ind.Comm. 1900 XIV p.707.

<sup>2</sup>Dry Goods Bulletin pp.30-31.

Table 3

The U.S. Silk Industry 1880-1909

	<u>No. of Firms</u>	<u>Capital</u> \$	<u>No. of Wage Earners</u> (inc. owners/ salaried)	<u>Value of</u> <u>Products</u> \$
1880	382	19,125,300	31,337	34,549,723
1890	472	51,007,537	50,913	69,154,599
1900	483	81,082,000	68,553	107,256,258
1909	852	152,158,000	105,238	196,912,000

Source: Eleventh Census of U.S. 1890 XIII pp.211-212, Twelfth Census of the U.S. 1900 IX pp.210-211, Thirteenth Census of U.S. 1910 X p.170.

The number of firms producing silk more than doubled in the thirty years 1880-1910. Capital invested in the industry increased sevenfold during the same period. The number of wage earners trebled in the race to expand production, and the value of silk products increased sixfold. It was an impressive record, testimony to the gospel of protectionism and to native ingenuity and ambition.

Paterson as the centre of the industry shared disproportionately in this expansion.

Table 4

The Paterson Silk Industry 1880-1910 (not including dyeplants)

	<u>No. of Firms</u>	<u>Capital</u> \$	<u>No. of Wage Earners</u>	<u>Value of Products</u> \$
1880	82	5,660,525	9,809	14,164,465
1890	90	12,533,491	11,596	22,058,624
1900	136	19,025,564	16,704	26,006,156
1910	276	26,446,795	20,099	40,358,271

Source: Tenth Census of the U.S. 1880 II p.430, Eleventh Census of the U.S. 1890 XII pp.426-429, Twelfth Census of the U.S. 1900 VIII pp.570-571, Thirteenth Census of the U.S. 1910 IX pp.782-783.



The city was not only universally recognized as the home of the industry, but its continued prosperity was confidently expected to accompany the growth of silk production. "The history of the growth of Paterson is a romance of American enterprise and American industry", the New York Press recorded in 1880.<sup>1</sup>

Practically everyone in the city shared the optimism. Even the city's silkworkers joined the enthusiastic chorus. "The time is not far distant", they declared before the Annual Congress of New Jersey Trade Unionists in 1897, "when Paterson will become Greater Paterson, embracing within its limits Passaic City, Haledon and North Paterson, and that time can be hastened by the advancement of the silk industry..."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>New York Daily Tribune September 25 1880.

<sup>2</sup>New Jersey Federation of Trades and Labor Unions Nineteenth Annual Congress 1897 (Jersey City 1897) n.p.

## Chapter Two

### THE EXPERIENCE OF INDUSTRIALIZATION

The rapid and distinctive development of the silk industry transformed Paterson and its economy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It also heralded a radical change in the lives of the city's expanding population. The experience of industrialism was new to both millowners and their workers. Both drew upon past, and usually European, experiences to take stock of the change. But beyond that similarities between the two groups diverge.

Silk manufacturers looked back over their shoulders towards competitors in Europe. They judged their performance and gauged their success by such comparisons. Mechanization, the "American idea", received sustenance and justification from the same source. The marked contrast between handloom centres in Europe and Paterson's towering mills inspired local millowners.

For Paterson's older social groups and its new army of silkworkers the fruits of industrial progress were less apparent. Ironically, by drawing on similar comparisons to their masters, the city's millhands discovered good reasons for dissension. Traditions and attitudes formed in European silk centres shaped their refusal to endorse the methods of Paterson's pioneering manufacturers. Workers' opposition to the new industrial techniques of silk manufacturing formed a dominant motif in the industrial development of the city.

Following the Civil War the new silk manufacturing industry

quickly became Paterson's single most important source of employment. As early as 1870 millhands were more numerous than any other work group in the city. The work experience of this expanding factory proletariat was to be shaped by the pre-occupations of its new masters, in particular by silk manufacturers' desire for technological progress. Despite the city's long established reputation as an industrial centre, work in most Paterson silk factories was distinctly advanced. By adopting the latest innovations of mechanization, powerloom weaving and accompanying forms of work organization, local millowners introduced a novel stage of factory production.

There was nothing in Paterson's industrial past to presage the sophistication of the new silk factories. The rapid growth of the silk industry and the vast expansion of factory production marked a new departure in the industrial life of the city. Cotton manufacturing, the basis of the city's industrial life in the early nineteenth century, had been only partly adapted to factory production. As an industry it lacked many of the characteristics of later silk manufacturing, most notably the steady application and discipline required of workers in a mechanized factory. The bulk of cotton yarn, after being spun in the city's mills, was sold off to independent weavers, working in their own homes or the small workshops that dotted the city.<sup>1</sup> The workforce that had been brought into these early cotton mills was largely composed of women and children; and although little is known of the work routine of this early labor force, there

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<sup>1</sup>Garber "The Silk Industry of Paterson, N.J. 1840-1913" pp.29-35.



are hints that it scarcely resembled the regimentation of later factory labor. For instance, little or no value was placed on uninterrupted production, a prime concern of silk manufacturers. Hours of work were regulated by hours of daylight, being much shorter during winter months. Likewise, pre-factory customs, such as the morning break for breakfast were an established component of early cotton mill life. The existence of "sub-bosses" within the mills, and cotton spinners acting as overseers of child labor, suggest that the adaptation of this workforce to mill life was not only a problem, but one which the city's cotton manufacturers ultimately gave up on.<sup>1</sup> By transferring the onus of "responsibility" onto sub-bosses who could make use of their familiarity with the workforce to coax or bully the millowners were in reality evading the problem of industrial discipline.<sup>2</sup> More importantly the exodus of cotton manufacturers from the city in the 1840s and afterwards prevented the development of more sophisticated techniques for the creation of a stable second-generation of factory workers.

The city's other major industry before silk took over was the manufacture of locomotives and the allied machine-tool industry. Here too, the plants were huge but the high degree of skills enabled the locomotive workers and toolmakers to maintain a status and independence which their employers were reluctant to abridge. Many shop-floor practices were governed

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<sup>1</sup>J.R. Commons A Documentary History of American Industrial Society (Cleveland, 1910) V. pp.63-66.

<sup>2</sup>The use of "sub-bosses" was a technique commonly employed by early British industrialists; see S. Pollard The Genesis of Modern Management: A Study of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain (London, 1965) p.189 and passim.

by custom as much as by the dictates of employers and mechanized production. During a molders' strike in 1886 in the principal machine and locomotive shops in the city, a principal grievance of employers was the objection to "...taking back the men who have been in the habit of staying out Mondays and Tuesdays to get over their Sunday holiday".<sup>1</sup> The problem did not disappear with a new generation of skilled metal workers. Twenty years later, despite the rapid decline of the locomotive industry and its amalgamation under the American Locomotive Company, the city's skilled metal workers were still resisting attempts to alter their customary workshop practices. At the Rogers plant of the American Locomotive Works, a two month strike occurred in 1907 because of a new manager's refusal to allow beer on the firm's premises or to allow workmen leave during the workday to visit a saloon. The "...beer privilege had been enjoyed for many years and was valued very highly".<sup>2</sup>

At the root of this dispute was the determination of the new locomotive corporation to increase efficiency in the plant but that goal, as usual, involved an assault on traditional workshop practices.<sup>3</sup> The truculence of the city's skilled locomotive builders in the face of such pressure was re-emphasized later in

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times September 14 1886.

<sup>2</sup>New Jersey Bureau of Statistics of Labor and Industries Thirtieth Annual Report 1907 (Trenton, 1908) pp.554, 667, 670 - hereafter NJBS Annual Reports.

<sup>3</sup>It seems probable that the drive for efficiency in the city's metal trades was part of the same movement throughout the engineering trades of the industrialized nations that was putting new pressures on skilled workingmen. See E.J. Hobsbawm "Customs, Wages and Work-Load" in Labouring Men (London, 1964) pp.344-370, and D. Montgomery "Workers Control of Machine Production in the Nineteenth Century" Labor History 17, No.4, 1976, pp.485-509.



1907 when blacksmiths in the Rogers shop struck at the introduction of "time-cards" by the plant's new management. The new system, which required the men to have their workcards punched at noon and again at 6.00 p.m., was offensive to workers who traditionally "...were at liberty to leave the shops on the completion of their day's work".<sup>1</sup>

Both the cotton and the locomotive industries indicate that Paterson's industrial heritage did not guarantee silk manufacturers a carte blanche to introduce at will their mills and new forms of work. Indeed other inhabitants also resented the intrusion of this new manufacturing element upon the city. In 1880, residents in the vicinity of the newly established Weidmann dyehouse complained virulently over the blowing of the factory whistle at 6.30 in the morning, at the noise of machinery and smell of chemicals from the plant. They went so far as to band together, raise funds and employ a leading city lawyer to secure an injunction forcing the removal of the plant. The resultant compromise was described as "a complete victory for the complainants"; Weidmann agreeing to stop the whistle, employ quieter machinery and cease both night and Sunday work shifts.<sup>2</sup> Likewise locomotive builders had earlier found it impossible to build a siding from the main railway track in the city straight into their plants, which were located in the industrial and commercial heart of Paterson. Popular opposition forced locomotive manufacturers to pull newly completed engines by teams of horses through the city's major thoroughfares to the rail terminus.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>N.J.B.S. Thirty First Annual Report 1908 p.374.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times September 25, 26 and 28 1880.

<sup>3</sup>Garber "The Silk Industry of Paterson" p.92.

Incidents such as these underline significant features of industrialization and its impact on Paterson. Clearly in a city with firmly established manufacturing roots the transition from workshop and highly skilled industry to factory production was not simply or uniformly accomplished. The work organization and practices of factory life were radically new and often resented as disruptive. Until late into the nineteenth century they were imposed rather than welcomed. In their primitive forms, industries such as cotton did not necessarily create a stable and disciplined workforce available to a later generation of industrialists. Locomotive building was the preserve of workers who maintained their traditional trade customs at least until the turn of the century. The regularity and discipline required in intensively mechanized industries was evident nowhere in Paterson before the arrival of the silk industry. Consequently a principal task of the new millowners was to forge a factory workforce attuned to their demands and presuppositions.

Early millowners, although mindful of opposition to the regimentation of mechanized factory production, were confident that harmonized relations between manufacturer and worker were possible. Several factors encouraged this view. Although factory organization predominated in the industry, prior to the 1880s weavers' work was not wholly dictated by mechanized techniques. In the 1860s and 1870s handloom work was much in evidence. Weavers toiled in factories, but inside their skills were at a high premium and provided them with an independence and status unknown to later generations of silkworkers. The powerloom was adopted on a wide scale in America in the 1870s - and at a much faster rate than in Europe - but in 1880 the



handloom had been far from extinguished. In that year, in New Jersey's silk industry, there were still more than fifteen hundred handlooms alongside almost three thousand powerlooms; although the employment of the handloom was to be virtually non-existent by 1890.<sup>1</sup>

In some factories handlooms still made up a high proportion of the looms in operation. At Hamil and Booth's, one of the city's largest mills employing over one thousand workers in 1880, there were still one hundred and fifty handlooms alongside one hundred and fifty powerlooms. In the Phoenix Manufacturing Company it was a similar story. In the workshops of smaller producers, such as the Paul Crawford Co. or John Lockett Co. handlooms also survived; their owners specializing in fine, handwoven silks or unable to afford the capital outlay on mechanized looms.<sup>2</sup>

The survival of the handloom, at least into the 1880s, was important for it gave silkworkers at least some measure of control over their work situation. It eased the transition to fully mechanized factory work. If the mill buzzer signalled their arrival and departure from the plant, it did not determine the pace at which handloom workers labored. Before the powerloom weavers toiled at their own, usually customary, speed concerned as much with the quality of their product as with the pace at which they manufactured it. As local manufacturers observed in 1880: "A weaver will produce about eight or ten yards of broad goods per day upon a hand loom while the power loom turns

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<sup>1</sup>Tenth Census of the U.S. 1880 II p.25, Clark History of Manufactures pp.452-454.

<sup>2</sup>Dry Goods Bulletin pp.33, 36, 48, 49.



out about eighteen yards, but the hand woven fabrics are considered superior in finish and durability".<sup>1</sup>

The latter was a powerful argument amongst millowners for the adoption of powerloom weaving. Its widespread application during the 1880s transformed work in Paterson's mills. On power looms the weaver's task was essentially one of machine minder. The automatic loom dictated the pace of work, stopping only when the silk threads broke, at which point the weaver intervened repairing fibres to set the machine in motion once more.<sup>2</sup> Not only must such work have been excruciatingly tedious, but perhaps more importantly, it demanded new work customs and discipline. To weavers it implied a new, and degraded status.

By the end of the 1880s labor in Paterson's mills was almost wholly transformed by this new form of production. "Labor in the silk mill has become so divided and sub-divided", a trade journal noted, "that in these latter days the operative does no more than the mechanic who makes a small though integral part of a vast machine. Practice, therefore, and not innate artistic sense, is what makes the worker perfect in the performance of his or her part in the work of producing the finished silk fabric".<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless local millowners expressed confidence in the plastic qualities of their workforce. They believed their weavers could or would see the virtues of technological progress. Typical of the outlook of silk manufacturers was a

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<sup>1</sup> ibid. p.38.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Commission on Industrial Relations  
Final Report and Testimony 61st Cong., 2nd sess., 1915-1916,  
III pp. 2434, 2469-2470. (hereafter C.I.R.)

<sup>3</sup> Textile America December 12 1897.

statement made by the Silk Association of America in 1879:

"Our countrymen have been much more prompt than Europeans in... substituting steam-driven machinery for the handloom....The workers have also been learning, so that they waste less silk, and perform their labor more efficiently in connection with the new machinery".<sup>1</sup>

Manufacturers felt their optimism was not without foundation. They were confident of attracting workers to their mills; and in the early years of the silk industry, Paterson's economic structure appeared conducive to their aims. In the 1870s, the city's....

"...men were employed in machine-shops and on heavy work. Their wives and children needed employment; and although this was afforded by the cotton mills, the operatives objected to it as being too confining and hard.... the girls and young women of Paterson thought it an honor, or at all events an evidence of respectability to be employed in the silk mill".<sup>2</sup>

Silk manufacturers liked to extoll the theme of "healthful, and profitable employment":

"The work is cleanly, comparatively light, and is not hurtful in any way to the operative. Hence it happens that respectable parents who would object to having their families employed in other factories are glad to have them busy in the silk mills. The contrast between the laboring classes of this country and of Europe is nowhere more striking than in this industry".<sup>3</sup>

In fact, of course, it was necessity rather than responsibility that provided "respectable parents" their chief motive in seeing their offspring employed. During the economic

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<sup>1</sup>Wyckoff The Silk Goods of America, p.8.

<sup>2</sup>L.P. Brockett The Silk Industry in America (New York, 1876) p. 115.

<sup>3</sup>Wyckoff The Silk Goods of America p.9, and American Silk Manufacture p.47.



depression of the 1870s when production had all but ceased in Paterson's locomotive and machine shops, the silk industry provided the sole source of income for many local families.<sup>1</sup> William Strange, silk manufacturer and organizer of relief in the city, congratulated himself; for "...had it not been for the thriving state of our industry great distress must inevitably have prevailed among the poorer operatives, many of whom, having been deprived of employment, were dependent upon the wages earned by their children in the silk mills for support of their families."<sup>2</sup>

Women and children formed a large proportion of the workforce in the early silk mills (Table 5). In 1890, the first year for which figures are available, women and girls composed almost half the mill labor force. Most were young and unmarried, as were many male employees. In comparison with Paterson's locomotive builders the age and conjugal structure of this textile workforce suggests that local silk factories were filled with daughters supplementing the family income in the years between school and marriage, and sons awaiting the opportunity to enter apprenticeships or more skilled and highly paid employment (Table 6). Almost sixty per cent of Paterson's silkworkers were under twenty four years of age in 1890, and over two thirds of the workforce was single. Although older and married hands made up a higher proportion of male workers in the industry, very few females toiled in the mills once married.

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<sup>1</sup>Shriner Paterson p.29.

<sup>2</sup>Brockett The Silk Industry in America p.175.



The other striking feature of the new mill workforce was the extensive employment of immigrants by local silk manufacturers. Of more than twelve thousand silkworkers in 1890, over fifty percent were foreign born. Of the remainder the vast bulk were second generation Americans. "Natives" constituted little more than ten per cent of the city's millhands.

The labor demands of silk manufacturers did not introduce immigration to Paterson. The city had long been a magnet for the foreign born and was familiar with some of the problems characteristic of the newly arrived. As early as the 1830s manufacturers had been attracting skilled metal workers from Sheffield with "tempting offers".<sup>1</sup> Similarly, English mill-owners, weavers, and spinners had come to the city in the 1820's and 1830's to invest and work in Paterson's cotton mills. The "monied manufacturers" were "esteemed highly" by the natives, but the English workers were disconcerting. Patersonians viewed them as "beastly people" who "get drunk, and curse and swear and use indecent language, and give great offence to the Americans".<sup>2</sup>

Despite this antipathy, British immigrants continued to flock to the city. In 1870 they made up the bulk of the city's foreign born. Of nearly 13,000 immigrants in the city in that year, over 9,000 were of English, Scottish or Irish origin.

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<sup>1</sup>Anon. The British Mechanics and Labourers' Hand Book and True Guide To The United States With Ample Notices Respecting Various Trades and Professions (London, 1840) p.233.

<sup>2</sup>Rev. Isaac Fidler Observations on Professions, Literature, Manners and Emigration in the United States and Canada Made During a Residence There in 1832 (London, 1833) pp.154-160.

Table 5

Paterson's Silkworkers 1890 (does not include c.200 dyeworkers)

Sex and Nativity

<u>Male</u>	<u>Native/N.P.</u>	<u>Native/F.P.</u>	<u>Foreign Born</u>
6,340	624	1,616	4,098
<u>Female</u>			
6,031	835	2,505	2,690

Country of Birth of Foreign Born

<u>Males</u>	<u>Germany</u>	<u>Ireland</u>	<u>Great Britain</u>	<u>Other</u>
	988	450	1,650	1,010
<u>Females</u>	346	846	1,009	489

Age Structure of Silkworkers

<u>Males</u>	<u>10-24</u>	<u>25-44</u>	<u>45-64</u>	<u>65+</u>
	2,804	2,542	945	77
<u>Females</u>	4,327	1,508	189	5
<u>Males and Females</u>	7,131	4,050	1,134	82

Conjugal Condition

<u>Males</u>	<u>Single</u> (and unknown)	<u>Married</u>	<u>Widowed/Divorced</u>
	3,246	2,943	151
<u>Females</u>	5,326	421	284

Source: Eleventh Census of the U.S. 1890 XVI pp.708-709.

Table 6

Paterson's Metalworkers 1890

(includes some workers not employed in the city locomotive and machine shops)

All male

<u>Occupation</u>		<u>Native/N.P.</u>	<u>Native /F.P.</u>	<u>Foreign Born</u>
Blacksmiths/ Wheelwrights	474	118	93	263
Brass Wkrs.	153	27	49	77
Iron, Steel Wkrs.	1,075	211	319	545
Machinists	1,279	292	404	583
Steam Boiler Makers	261	31	112	118
Totals	3,242	679	977	1,586

Country of Birth of Foreign Born

	<u>Germany</u>	<u>Ireland</u>	<u>Great Britain</u>	<u>Other</u>
Blacksmiths	26	109	95	33
Brass Wkrs.	8	25	36	8
Iron, Steel Wkrs.	38	174	191	142
Machinists	64	151	314	54
Steam Boiler Makers	-	86	26	6
	136	545	662	243

Age Structure of Metalworkers

	<u>10-24</u>	<u>25-44</u>	<u>45-64</u>	<u>65+</u>
Totals	819	1,531	788	104
Blacksmiths	70	233	147	24
Brass Wkrs.	70	65	18	-
Iron, Steel Wkrs.	327	503	224	23
Machinists	310	581	333	54
Steam Boiler Makers	42	149	66	3

Conjugal Condition

<u>Single (and unknown)</u>	<u>Married</u>	<u>Widowed/Divorced</u>
1,079	2,032	131

Source: Eleventh Census of U.S. 1890 XVI pp. 708-709.



Besides them only Germans and Dutch, amounting to another 3,000, formed a major immigrant group.<sup>1</sup> This pattern prevailed over the next twenty years despite Paterson's remarkable expansion.

Immigration to Paterson was closely tied to the expansion of the silk industry. A local observer noted the newcomers' arrival "every night by the 'emigrant train'...quaintly attired newcomers...with their quainter luggage, who had come straight to Paterson, attracted hither by the enthusiastic reports sent "home" by friends who had come earlier to try their fortunes in the "Lyons of America"". <sup>2</sup> The hope of regular employment, higher wages and personal contacts all played a part in attracting newcomers to Paterson and its mills.

Waves of immigration closely followed trade conditions, both in Europe and Paterson. The emigration of British silk-workers, the most important source of labor for early mill-owners, typified a general European movement to Paterson. Free trade in Britain sounded the death knell of the country's silk industry. With the signing of the Cobden Treaty between Britain and France in 1860 the industry all but collapsed. The agreement removed import duties from cheaper French silk goods and almost immediately had a drastic effect on British silk production. Tariffs imposed by the U.S. Government to protect its

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<sup>1</sup>Ninth Census of the U.S. 1870 I, pp. 379-391.

<sup>2</sup>W.W. Clayton and W. Nelson History of Bergen and Passaic Counties, New Jersey with Biographical Sketches of Many of its Pioneers and Prominent Men (Philadelphia, 1882) p.407.

fledgling silk industry compounded English manufacturers' problems. Thousands were thrown out of work as the mills and workshops of Coventry and Macclesfield shut down. In 1863 the Macclesfield Silk Weavers' Emigration Society in a petition to Parliament complained that "...more than one half of the hands engaged in the silk trade are hopelessly thrown out of employment".<sup>1</sup> Nor did the industry show many signs of reviving in the next twenty years. Apart from brief revivals during the 1860s, and again during the Franco-Prussian War when the French industry was seriously disrupted, British silk declined more or less constantly. The ribbon weaving districts of Coventry and Congleton all but disappeared. Even in Macclesfield, where the industry was better equipped to compete with European rivals, decline was unavoidable. From 1859 to 1885 the number of silk mills fell from fifty five to thirty, and the number of silk operatives from fourteen thousand to less than five. In the latter year the community boasted two thousand empty houses. Such statistics cannot convey the resultant hardship and misery for the workers of the "Doomed Town". But they do suggest reasons for the particular emigration patterns from British silk centres. Some went to the textile centres of Lancashire, whilst others sailed for America.<sup>2</sup>

Emigration was sometimes of short duration. Many who had left for Paterson in the 1860s returned to Macclesfield a decade

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<sup>1</sup>House of Commons "Reports of the Select Committee on Public Petitions 1863" App. 837, pp. 395-396. - British Library, London.

<sup>2</sup>"Royal Commission into the Depression of Trade and Industry - Second Report" Parliamentary Papers XXI 1886 Cd.4715 Q.7197, and "Third Report" P.P. XXIII 1886 Cd.4797 Q.13736, 4056 (hereafter "R.C. - Reports").

Table 7

Nativity of Paterson Population 1890

Total Population = 78,347

Native Born/Native Parentage = 19,730

Native Born/Foreign Parentage = 26,824

Foreign Born = 31,162

Leading Immigrant Groups (includes native and foreign born)

Irish = 14,791

English = 9,274

Scottish = 4,074

German = 9,047

Dutch = 4,449 (includes only foreign born)

Source: Eleventh Census of the U.S. 1890 XV pp.580-583,  
670-673, 710-711.



later when trade prospects brightened for a short period in the British industry.<sup>1</sup> The flow of emigrants from England was always at its most intense when employment prospects in the homeland were least favourable. As soon as trade prospects in Macclesfield brightened, and particularly when the American economy was depressed, as in the late 1870s, English immigrants began returning to their native land.<sup>2</sup> Then, when conditions reversed, the normal flow of traffic resumed. As the Macclesfield Chronicle noted in 1886: "The resumption of emigration to Paterson is a sign that the prospects of weavers - especially handloom weavers - are far from hopeful..." That the bulk of Paterson's immigrants were hard-pressed weavers fleeing a depressed industry in Europe can hardly be doubted for the same issue of the journal contained the week's list of emigrants and their destinations. It consisted of one farm laborer going to Toronto, one fustian cutter off to New York and eleven weavers all heading for Paterson.<sup>3</sup>

That Paterson should prove a common destination is scarcely surprising. It was not only the bustling centre of the infant U.S. silk industry, and adjacent to the chief port of entry, but more important in Paterson "...the manufacturers, many of them, are Macclesfield men, and a Macclesfield weaver is selected for

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Labor Standard May 29 1880.

<sup>2</sup>New York Herald March 8 1880. Hosts of French immigrants followed a similar route during the depression of the 1890s. See U.S. Congress, Senate Reports of the Immigration Commission S.Doc.633, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., 1909-1910 XI pp.17-20 (hereafter Immigration Commission).

<sup>3</sup>Macclesfield Chronicle May 7 1886.

his ability before the weavers of other countries".<sup>1</sup> Many of Paterson's early silk manufacturers were Coventry and Macclesfield factory owners who had emigrated after the collapse of the British industry, bringing their machinery and know-how with them.<sup>2</sup>

Probably the most important were the Ryle family from Macclesfield who had pioneered silk production in Paterson from the 1840s. During the 1860s and 1870s a spate of others followed, men such as Benjamin Tilt, a Coventry ribbon manufacturer; George Frost, William Crew, and James Nightingale, all from Macclesfield.<sup>3</sup> The best remembered of them was Catholina Lambert, an emigrant from the Coventry silk region, who was by the beginning of the twentieth century a millionaire and the city's leading manufacturer. He left a spectacular memorial to his "Old World" origins and was to be immortalized in the verse of William Carlos Williams

"the poor English boy,  
the immigrant....  
....a Limey,  
his head full of castles, the pivots of that  
curt dialectic (while it lasted), built himself  
a Balmoral on the alluvial silt, the rock-fall  
skirting the volcanic upthrust of the "Mountain".<sup>4</sup>

The "Balmoral" was actually a replica of Warwick Castle (Warwick was his birthplace) built on Garrett Mountain, a steep ridge

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<sup>1</sup>P.P. XXIII 1886 "R.C. - Third Report" Q.13839, R.T. Berthoff British Immigrants in Industrial America (Harvard, 1953).

<sup>2</sup>Textile America October 30 1897.

<sup>3</sup>See the biographical details in the Dry Goods Bulletin and W.W. Clayton & W. Nelson History of Bergen and Passaic Counties.

<sup>4</sup>W.C. Williams Paterson (New York, 1963) Book III p.99.

bordering Paterson which today still casts an imposing shadow across the city.

Undoubtedly these pioneering English employers brought skilled hands with them. In the early years of the American industry skills were not entirely diluted by mechanization; thus technical knowledge was at a premium in a country with no recognized traditions of silk manufacture. As early as 1873 an American millowner exclaimed: "We are importing not fabrics but men".<sup>1</sup> Emigrating manufacturers from France, Germany and Switzerland also brought their skilled hands along, but the English were the most conspicuous.<sup>2</sup> With prospect of regular employment and earnings three times higher than in England hundreds of British silkworkers left for Paterson during the 1860s and 1870s, soon earning the city the title: "The Macclesfield of America".<sup>3</sup> John Twemlow, a Macclesfield weaver who left for Paterson in the 1860s was quick to point out that "...as a rule they are the better class of people that will go out to America", often the young and ambitious who "...in Paterson can always obtain employment in preference to either Germans or French". Many probably shared the dream of Robert Clark, a weaver who had left for Paterson in 1863 and returned

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<sup>1</sup>"Reports by H.M. Secretaries of Embassy and Legation Respecting Factories for Spinning and Weaving of Textile Fabrics Abroad" Parliamentary Papers 1873 LXVIII Cd. 826.

<sup>2</sup>See entries in Dry Goods Bulletin and in A.H. Heusser The History of the Silk Dyeing Industry in the United States (Paterson, 1927). U.S. Congress, Reps., Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury Transmitting a Report of the Commissioners of Immigration upon the Causes which Incite Immigration to the U.S., 52nd Cong., 1st sess., Exec. Doc. 235, 1892 I p.124, II pp.68, 73, 75, 89, 95-100. (hereafter Commissioners of Immigration 1892).

<sup>3</sup>P.P. XXIII 1886 "R.C. - Third Report" Q.13940-13943, 13839.



in the 1870s. His intention was to save his American earnings and return to a life of relative ease in his hometown, like the Macclesfield manufacturer before him "...who came back a few years ago independent and spent the rest of his life in Macclesfield in a very nice position".<sup>1</sup>

Certainty of employment and high wages clearly impressed an English visitor to Paterson in 1883. Pleased with the city's "clean, well-ordered" appearance, he thought it a fit and proper place for the throngs of English silkworkers who, "out of employment are making their way to Paterson, and becoming quickly absorbed in the increasing number of manufactories there." Thomas Greenwood was not alone in his favourable impression. On his ocean crossing he met "a Paterson silk dyer, who had been on a visit to Macclesfield, his native place, after an absence of some years." They fell into conversation and Greenwood

"....asked him if he would prefer to have remained in England rather than be returning to Paterson...and his answer was a very decided negative. As a place of residence he said he would prefer Macclesfield but as for labour and its relative remuneration, the comparison lay most decidedly, he said, in favour of Paterson. He was, I should remark, evidently a well-skilled artisan, who had, by a thoroughly experienced knowledge, made himself invaluable to his firm..."

The material well-being of Greenwood's fellow voyager is attested by his holiday in his homeland, and his affluence was not unique among Paterson's millhands. Greenwood found that "the condition of those in the trade in Paterson is very creditable. The operatives have a comfortable and well-to-do appearance....They are infinitely better off than hundreds in the English districts referred to!"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ibid. Q.14011, 14044, 14055, 14066.

<sup>2</sup> Greenwood A Tour in the United States pp.138, 139, 141.

Whether prompted by dread of the workhouse or by the dream of gold-paved streets, thousands of European immigrants were attracted to Paterson in the three decades following the Civil War. Many, like Greenwood's anonymous dyer, prospered and some quickly became indistinguishable from native Americans. "It was curious", one observer remarked of Paterson's newcomers, "to see how speedily these strangers were absorbed into the common body of inhabitants, and how quickly they doffed their old-country ways and became citizens 'to the manner born'".<sup>1</sup> But most immigrants probably agreed with Greenwood's man that "as a place of residence" they preferred their land of birth.

Ethnic origins were commonly expressed in the growing city. The Macclesfield "wakes" survived the journey across the Atlantic, as did the Macclesfield Provident Society and other friendly society lodges.<sup>2</sup> The "Macclesfield Arms" was a favourite tavern on Market Street.<sup>3</sup> Association football, rugby and cricket were all regular features of social life in the city until the turn of the century. Even pidgeon-racing attracted a considerable following amongst English immigrants in the 1880s.<sup>4</sup> Most important was the Sons of St George, a federation of fraternal lodges, which by 1887 was celebrating

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<sup>1</sup> Clayton and Nelson History of Bergen and Passaic Counties p.407.

<sup>2</sup> Paterson Evening News July 12 1892, Macclesfield Courier and Herald October 6 1883, American Silk Journal May 1890.

<sup>3</sup> Paterson Labor Standard August 6 1881.

<sup>4</sup> Paterson Pencilings September 26, October 17, December 26 1891, Paterson Daily Guardian March 2 1887.

its tenth anniversary, and included the Wilberforce, Shakespeare and Loyalty lodges. In that year a vigorous meeting of its members met in the rooms of the English Philanthropic and Athletic Society in the city to listen to Richard Walmsley lecture on a recent visit to Macclesfield.<sup>1</sup>

The role of these fraternal lodges extended beyond a mere sentimental concern for the homeland. They provided a medium through which knowledge and prospects for immigration were disseminated, sending back frequent reports to the Macclesfield press of employment and trade conditions in Paterson. Thus they were fundamental to the major waves of British immigration to the city. It was from the meetings of such lodges that visitors to Paterson returned to Macclesfield to encourage emigration across the Atlantic.<sup>2</sup> Many would-be emigrants were too poor to raise the fare. A local weaver noted "...it is not that they have the money themselves, their friends in Paterson send them over money, and it is in that way that hundreds have gone out".<sup>3</sup> Friendly and fraternal lodges both in Macclesfield and Paterson assisted in the process by raising funds.<sup>4</sup>

Such was the volume of Macclesfield emigration to Paterson that the city became celebrated as a miniature "hold Hingland".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian March 19 1887.

<sup>2</sup>Macclesfield Courier and Herald January 20, February 3, March 24, April 28 1883, January 20, February 10 1894.

<sup>3</sup>P.P. XXIII 1886 "R.C. - Third Report" Q.14067.

<sup>4</sup>ibid. Q.13957-13960, Macclesfield Chronicle February 26 1886.

<sup>5</sup>New York Herald March 8 1880.



"Here I could listen to my native dialect in its almost pure state, and stumble upon faces that I had missed without knowing to what 'bourne' they had gone", remarked Ben Brierley an English visitor, in 1885.<sup>1</sup> In turn, the English immigrant community commanded a prominent position in Paterson society. Brierley's visit was toasted with "high jinks" - a "grand reception" at the City Opera House - attended by "aldermen, councilmen and officials of the corporation" and chaired by ex-mayor Buckley, an Englishman and manufacturer of textile machinery.<sup>2</sup> Similar celebrations feted other British visitors to Paterson.<sup>3</sup>

If friends, relatives and some familiar institutions eased the process of adaption to a new environment newcomers still found conditions in the New World fell far short of their ideals. An "Anglo-Patersonian" wrote home in the 1880s lamenting the "miserable" condition of his adopted city. "When trade is slack" the writer noted, "the unemployed weaver...has no alternative but to tramp through the dirty, ill-paved streets of the city.... What a contrast the intellectual life of Paterson presents to that of any English town or village. I have before me a newspaper printed in a small town in the West Riding of Yorkshire. It contains reports of lectures...of literary and scientific societies, and in addition it records the meetings of the

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<sup>1</sup>B. Brierley Ab-O'Th'-Yate in Yankeeland: The Results of Two Trips to America (London, 1885) p.198.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. pp.166-168.

<sup>3</sup>J. Wright A Centennial Tour in the United States and Canada (Macclesfield, 1877) p.27.

Parliamentary debating societies, where the village politicians meet to answer the questions of the house. How much better are all these methods of spending the time than those which prevail here".<sup>1</sup> Concerns more basic than intellectual stimulants fed the grievances of another "English Sparrow" who wrote home:

"If the distress which at present prevails in this city were found in any English town, charitable associations would be organized at once and relief given, but because the poor are left to suffer in silence, because there are no soup kitchens or blanket distribution, foolish people on your side of the Atlantic imagine we are well off, and Paterson is regarded as a capital market still for the surplus labour of Macclesfield".<sup>2</sup>

For those who found work life in Paterson silk factories was scarcely less distressing. Millwork was unlike that in England or most silk centres in Europe. It proved a constant source of grievance for newcomers.

Many immigrants had woven silk in the "Old Country". England provided a large contingent of newcomers, but sizeable groups also came from France, Germany and Switzerland. In each of these European centres the silk industry conformed to a similar level of development and its workers shared common work traditions and experiences. In England, France and Germany most had worked as master or journeymen weavers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Macclesfield Courier and Herald February 17 1883.

<sup>2</sup> ibid. February 3 1883.

<sup>3</sup> A. Milward and S.B. Saul The Economic Development of Continental Europe 1780-1870 (London, 1973) pp.322, 324, 458-459, J.H. Clapham The Economic Development of France and Germany 1815-1914 (Cambridge, 1921) pp.252-255.

Weaving in the attic of their own home, or perhaps in the small workshop of a master weaver, they were familiar with a productive process that was essentially pre-industrial. Unlike in the cotton industry the production of silk in Europe, at least in the weaving branches, remained relatively untouched by steam driven machinery and the factory unit until well into the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> In 1880 Carrol D. Wright, a United States Census reporter, claimed that there were still over forty thousand hand looms at work in the French silk centre of Lyons. Here whole families would live, work and sleep in the rooms from which they plied their trade, "sullen and listless" and fiercely resistant to the attempts of manufacturers to induce them to weave on power looms under factory roofs.<sup>2</sup> Even when French silk manufacturers opened factories in the countryside surrounding Lyons and St. Etienne the city handloom weavers preferred to eke out a living in their tiny workshops, leaving power loom work to the peasant girls or Italian migrants who had trekked over the Alps in search of work.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> P. Mantoux The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century: An Outline of the Beginnings of the Modern Factory System in England (London, 1928) pp.197-201. P. Mathias The First Industrial Nation: An Economic History of Britain 1700-1914 (London, 1969) pp.128. A. Dunham The Industrial Revolution in France 1815-1848 (New York, 1955) pp. 170-174, 307-327.

<sup>2</sup> C.D. Wright "Report on the Factory System in the United States" Tenth Census of the U.S. 1880 (Washington, 1883) II pp.19-20.

<sup>3</sup> P.P. XXII 1886 "R.C. - Second Report" Appendix Pt.II pp.125-129, "Report of Commission of Inquiry into the Depression of Trade in France 1884-1885". Parliamentary Papers 1886 XXIII Cd.4667 pp.6-9. Macclesfield Courier and Herald February 17 1877, New York Times February 20 1877.



In Germany and England the picture was scarcely different. During the 1880s the silk industry of Crefeld, Germany was still largely a "cottage industry" in which "thousands of poor people" were doomed to "a treadmill existence...with but the coarsest of food...(and) no future but days of ceaseless toil". As late as 1890 handlooms still outnumbered power looms by 4:1 in Crefeld.<sup>1</sup> In England, the single most important source of immigrant weavers to Paterson, the picture was changing, but still essentially pre-industrial. In its basic characteristics the English industry typified the background of early European emigrants to Paterson.

Spitalfields, London had traditionally been the home of the English handicraft silk industry. In the early nineteenth century it was supplanted by new centres in northern England. Coventry, in the southern Midlands, developed as the chief silk ribbon producing region. Further north Macclesfield and its surrounding villages became the centre of the broad silk industry.<sup>2</sup> A weaving area since the seventeenth century, Coventry was characterized by handloom and household work until the 1830s. In that decade power looms and factorization were adopted on a substantial scale. Despite a spate of industrial upheavals, sometimes violent as weavers resisted the disruption of traditional work methods, production continued to shift to newly constructed factories in the city.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Macclesfield Courier and Herald November 11 1883. Wright A Centennial Tour; Royal Jubilee Exhibition, Manchester 1887 Proceedings of a Conference for the Promotion of the Silk Industries of the United Kingdom (Manchester 1887) pp.37-41; S. Pollard and C. Holmes Documents in European Economic History (London, 1968) I pp.307-308; Clapham The Economic Development of France and Germany pp.298-299, 93-94.

<sup>2</sup>Sir F. Warner The Silk Industry of the United Kingdom: Its Origin and Development (London, 1911) pp.57-82.

<sup>3</sup>P. Searby "Weavers and Freemen in Coventry 1820-1861:

In Macclesfield the picture was much the same. Although some processes of silk production had been organized on a factory basis relatively early in the nineteenth century, the weaving branches were still largely in the hands of journeymen and master weavers toiling in their homes or small workshops. Like their counterparts in Coventry and the other silkweaving villages and towns of Cheshire and south Lancashire, the Macclesfield workers had staged a long rearguard campaign against the introduction of power looms and the factory. In the 1820s and 1830s opposition to factory production resulted in riots in both Macclesfield and Coventry. Again in 1860 the Coventry industry was brought to a halt as weavers fought bitterly against new loom techniques housed in factory buildings.<sup>1</sup>

Aversion to factory life stemmed from a recognition that it would shatter the work and social traditions of these weaving communities, and with them a culture based upon the independence of the self-governing artisan. It was a drama that had been enacted earlier in the nineteenth century in the cotton and woollen districts of Britain and could scarcely have

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Social and Political Traditionalism in an Early Victorian Town" (Ph.D. Dissertation Warwick, 1972) pp.143-162.

<sup>1</sup>Warner The Silk Industry pp.107-169; V.E. Chancellor ed. Master and Artisan in Victorian England: The Diary of William Andrews and the Autobiography of Joseph Gutteridge (London, 1969) pp.174-177; Searby "Weavers and Freeman" pp.509-531; J. Prest The Industrial Revolution in Coventry (Oxford, 1960) pp.93-95, 116-119; C.S. Davies A History of Macclesfield (Manchester, 1961) pp.129-135, 188-196; A. Rushton My Life as Farmer's Boy, Factory Lad, Teacher and Preacher (Manchester, 1909) pp.31-2, 48-54, 63-69.



reassured handloom silk weavers of the Midlands.<sup>1</sup> Because silk weaving required a level of skill and expertise uncommon in cotton or woollen production it had escaped, at least until the 1830s, the advent of the power loom and factory organization. Only in the preparatory stages of silk production, spinning and twisting, had extensive factorization taken place in the first half of the nineteenth century, and here the hands were largely those of women and children.<sup>2</sup> But from the 1830s the skilled handloom weaver was threatened by mechanization and the factory in all aspects of his trade.

Pressure on wages was one aspect of the handloom weavers' reluctance to enter the factory, but it can hardly convey the weight of feeling behind their opposition to the power loom and cheap female labor in the newly erected mills. The slavery and degraded status of the factory was to be avoided at all costs. For men, factory life had a "low moral status" and many objected even to their children and wives entering such employment. "Respectable hands strive to keep their children out of factories", an observer of the Coventry silk industry noted in the 1850s, for not only did the "mixing of sexes" prevent young girls from learning the "duties of maternity", but steady wages gave them an independence such that "...if they have cause to be dis-

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<sup>1</sup> E.P. Thompson The Making of the English Working Class (London, 1963) pp.297-346.

<sup>2</sup> Mantoux The Industrial Revolution pp. 197-201; Mathias First Industrial Nation p.128.



satisfied with the conduct of their parents, they will leave them".<sup>1</sup> Moreover such attitudes often survived the collapse of homework and the arrival of the factory on a wide scale. In 1870 we can still find a weaver urging:

"If silk weaving cannot be retained for the men, for God's sake let us try to keep it for the women. It is a clean, healthy, and, I may also say, a comfortable occupation. It can and has been carried on at home, and thus enables the girls to be under the control of their parents." 2

The evil possibilities of factory employment for family life were not the only or even the main thrust behind the handloom weavers' opposition to the industrialization of their craft. But they do indicate the spirit and quality of that resistance. When machine-breaking and general disorder proved ineffective in the 1830s the opposition of weavers forced their employers to reach more complex arrangements for preserving the independence of the craft. In Coventry weavers achieved the erection of rows of cottages containing looms in the upper floors and powered by a shaft running through the upper storey which was turned by a steam engine erected in the centre of the row.<sup>3</sup> More commonly manufacturers supplied homeworkers with looms which were rented out of their earnings, - "loom standing" - or independent weavers rented machines in the new mills.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Chancellor Master and Artisan p.122; C. Bray The Industrial Employment of Women: Being a Comparison Between the Condition of People in the Watch Trade in Coventry, in Which Women Are Not Employed, and the People in the Ribon Trade in Which They Are Employed (London, 1857) pp. 4-8.

<sup>2</sup>British Silk Supply Association, Journal of the Silk Supply Association April 1870.

<sup>3</sup>J. Watts The Facts of the Cotton Famine (London 1866) pp.12-13.

<sup>4</sup>Chancellor Master and Artisan p.177, Warner The Silk Industry 117-118, 134, 140, P.P. XXII 1886, "R.C. - 2nd Report" Q.13735.

Unsatisfactory as such arrangements may have been they preserved, for weavers, some measure of independence. It was, at least, a far cry from the factory organization that was to characterize the industry after 1860, as an "old time" handloom weaver made clear in a letter to the local press in the 1880s. "Forty years ago", he declared, "...employment was clean, easy and healthy, the workers...were not called up by "bell" or "buzzer", nor were they regulated by an Imperial Factory Act....Their homes were pictures of cleanliness... Their habits were characterized by simple sports and amusements, and they were as free from vice as they were from extravagance".<sup>1</sup> The writer went on to reminisce about the decayed culture of the weaving community; with its accent on self-improvement and education, its radical traditions, and the meetings of local groups of musicians and amateur naturalists and botanists. It was patently a world that had disappeared by the 1880s.

Yet rosy and sentimental as the letter may have been, it contained a shrewd perception in its insistent abhorrence of factory discipline and regulation (whether in the form of "buzzer" or "factory act") and its celebration of the virtues of the independent artisan. The writer had presided over the dissolution of the world of the self-regulating weaver, and he was shamed and grieved by the experience. His truculence was based as much upon moral as economic considerations. For with

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from Andrew Mellor in Macclesfield Courier April 7 1883.



the passing of the hand loom went not only the living standards of the independent weavers but also their ability to sustain a distinct work and social culture. It was a way of life that stemmed essentially from the control of the weaver over his work situation, and captured so accurately in the humorous tales of the local dialect writer Thomas Brierley.<sup>1</sup> Brierley's characters are invariably handloom weavers who due to their excessive taste for "whoam-brewed" ale fail to meet their delivery deadlines. The tales are almost monstrously repetitious and perhaps in that present the valuable insight into the work rhythms of the weaving communities. Brierley's weavers work as and when their pocket demands, usually in fits and starts, and often with the assistance of the family or neighbours. The easy conviviality of their social orbit, often centred around the local taproom, and their confident and sometimes abrasive bargaining with the textile merchant who supplies them all caricature the pre-industrial world of the independent artisan. That Brierley's popularity was at its height in the 1860s and 1870s suggests that for his audience his world was not a distant memory.

Many cultural artifacts of this pre-industrial heritage survived the advent of silk mills and impinged upon factory work until late in the nineteenth century. In 1870 the chairman

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<sup>1</sup>See for example Brierley's Nonsense and Tomfoolery (Manchester, 1870) and Th' Silk Weaver's Fust Bearin-Whoam (Manchester, 1864). See also Rushton My Life; Warner The Silk Industry pp.500-515; S. Bamford Passages in the Life of a Radical and Early Days (London, 1893 ed.) I pp. 106-07, 130-139.



of the Silk Supply Association of Britain was exhorting:

"...the handloom is doomed, and must make way for its iron competitor the power loom, and the whole system of our silk manufacture must be regenerated and brought under factory discipline".<sup>1</sup> His insistence betrayed the difficulties faced by factory masters in regulating unco-operative millhands.

Even when brought into the fold of the factory formerly independent weavers did not prove pliant material. Artisan traditions were preserved. The annual weavers' "Wakes" were a regular feature of Macclesfield mill life until late in the nineteenth century, as was the celebration of "barnaby", a local holiday during which brass bands and friendly societies paraded, excursions took place and the silk factories closed down for a week.<sup>2</sup> As late as 1886 a leading Macclesfield silk manufacturer complained: "...it cannot be justly said that the weavers of Macclesfield are as a class indolent...(but) in many cases the weavers do not work the full number of hours recognized by the rules of the factory".<sup>3</sup> Moreover traditional attitudes towards work and its payment could govern millowners as well as weavers. Long after the once powerful silkworkers' unions had been broken in Macclesfield, a local manufacturer explained that custom made it difficult for millowners to lower prices paid to weavers during the dull season. "There used to be in Macclesfield a disinclination", he observed, "more sentimental than seriously founded, to accept nominally

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<sup>1</sup>Journal of the Silk Supply Association January 1870.

<sup>2</sup>Macclesfield Courier and Herald October 6 1877.

<sup>3</sup>P.P. XXI 1886 "R.C. - Second Report" Q.7658, 7761.

low prices for certain fabrics".<sup>1</sup>

Many weavers sought to avoid the regimentation of factory labor. Although some were drafted into silk factories it was more often women and youths who manned the power looms. Numerous weavers continued to eke out an existence on handloom work, even at the cost of longer hours and less wages than factory employment. In Macclesfield, for example, workers revived the Handloom Weavers' Association, first established in the early nineteenth century, and invested in their own cooperative, the Macclesfield Silk Manufacturing Company.<sup>2</sup> Even more fled the English industry entirely; migrating to new employment within Britain, or more usually emigrating to the United States, especially after the decline of the British silk industry in the 1860s and 1870s.

Paterson's early immigrants brought with them distinctive attitudes to work. But their European background had ill-prepared them for the rigorous demands of U.S. silk manufacturers. Nowhere had they experienced mill work as technologically advanced as that in Paterson. Nowhere was the emphasis on mechanization and factory organization as dominant as in the U.S. Immigrant attitudes were rooted in an earlier phase of silk production. Even when exposed to the limited introduction of factory work in Europe they had recoiled. In effect Paterson's immigrants comprised a workforce in the process of

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<sup>1</sup>ibid. Q.7394.

<sup>2</sup>Davies History of Macclesfield pp.188-196.

becoming a modern factory proletariat. They were only beginning to come to terms with what Eric Hobsbawm has called, "the 'rules of the game' of modern industrial society".<sup>1</sup>

As in Europe the immigrant weavers' response to Paterson's silk industry was characterized by resistance to the factory and the powerloom. In the early years some were able to work in a customary manner. Before 1890 loom improvements had not entirely diluted traditional skills. Moreover the adoption of power looms organized in large production units was not uniform throughout the industry. Small employers, especially those concentrating upon specialized goods, required skilled hands and preserved handloom work. Their workshops dotted the city until the 1890s.

In this atmosphere some manufacturers were forced to defer to the traditional work practices of immigrants. In the handkerchief branch of the silk industry much of the hemming and finishing was subcontracted out to women and girls who worked in their own homes. Over 1,000 workers were employed thus, some having up to half a dozen sewing machines in their houses and employing others to work for them. It was in 1880 a thriving branch of the silk industry "...affording occupation to hundreds who disliked working in a mill". In that year, however, it was re-organized on a factory basis where steam-driven machinery facilitated cheaper production "by hands

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<sup>1</sup>E. Hobsbawm Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries (Manchester, 1959) p.108.



employed by the week or by the piece".<sup>1</sup> Similarly in nearby West Hoboken and Jersey City, silk manufacturers provided looms for weavers to work in their own homes. It was a system of production apparently fraught with risk for the manufacturers and disagreeable into the bargain, for during a wave of silk strikes in New Jersey in 1877 they openly battled with weavers in an effort to repossess their looms.<sup>2</sup>

Other immigrant silkworkers sought greater independence from manufacturers. They desired self-employment or to avoid mill work entirely. The two were often synonymous. The employment structure of the silk industry surely reflects this aspiration. Mature weavers were content to leave the drudgery of machine tending to women and children. Similarly the prevalence of "commission" work in late nineteenth century Paterson signifies the attachment of immigrants to customary modes of labor. Those arriving in the 1870s and 1880s frequently shunned mill work preferring to take a chance on making a living by weaving, on a commission basis, in their own tiny workshops rented in mills or set up in their own homes.

If self-employed weavers can later be seen as anachronisms, they were enduring, for as late as the 1920s and '30s they could still be found in Paterson.<sup>3</sup> Their eventual demise was not as

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times January 4 1880.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times April 25 1877.

<sup>3</sup>G. Hutchins Labor and Silk (New York, 1929) pp.24-25, 53.

clear as might be expected, In a rapidly expanding industry the prospect of building up a profitable business, if slim, was not impossible. A number of prominent silk manufacturers in the city testified to the American ideal of the "self made man". J. Phillips Mackay, who in 1880 employed over two hundred hands, had started but six years before in a single room rented in one of the city's factories. There were others. J. Marland, a "self made" weaver, rented a workshop in the Dale mill where he had installed fourteen looms. In another workshop in the same mill John Lockett, who set up on his own in 1878, commanded eighteen looms two years later. Similarly J.J. Scott, "from insignificant beginnings", rented a whole floor of the Grant Locomotive works, where he employed upwards of one hundred and fifty workers in 1880.<sup>1</sup>

Other encouragements existed for aspirant manufacturers. In a city with ample mill properties, often only in partial use since the exodus of cotton manufacturers from the city in the mid-nineteenth century, workshops were readily available. Looms were scarcely more difficult to obtain - some were brought over as part of the luggage of immigrant weavers, others could be obtained on credit from silk commission merchants. The most important prerequisite, skilled experience in silk production, was usually in abundance. Demand for silk products, stimulated by the protectionist policies of the federal government, made for an industry in which "everybody who can borrow a loom goes

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<sup>1</sup>Dry Goods Bulletin pp.39, 59, 49, 48.

into the silk business". By 1880 local boosters announced: "...it is not impossible for a skilful, industrious workman to commence business with a single loom and in a few years become the head of a large concern".<sup>1</sup>

Reflecting their artisan backgrounds English immigrant weavers were the most likely to establish their own workshops and weave, on a commission basis, for silk merchants. Hawthorne to the north of Paterson, "Weavertown" in the eastern section of the city, and Totowa on its western edges were described as "...reproductions of English weaving hamlets" in the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>2</sup> There are, a local observer noted in the latter decade, "...numerous instances in and around Paterson, where a so-called master weaver who has previously been a journeyman weaver, has two or three looms in his house. Within the past year this class of weavers has been largely increased by immigration from France and England. They bring their looms with them".<sup>3</sup> The same observer pointed out that far from being a temporary adjustment to a new form of industrial organization the survival of these small master weavers actively encouraged their multiplication. Independent producers "...employ so-called journeymen weavers, who in turn will become master weavers and loom owners..."<sup>4</sup>

Large manufacturers did not always look upon the independent

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<sup>1</sup>American Silk Journal October 1890; Macclesfield Courier and Herald December 1 1883; New York Daily Tribune September 25 1880.

<sup>2</sup>American Silk Journal June 1892.

<sup>3</sup>Brockett The Silk Industry in America pp.119; Paterson Labor Standard March 20 1880.

<sup>4</sup>ibid. pp.153-4.



artisan weavers with disfavour. Indeed some were pleased with the development of a "jobbing" trade. It did not threaten the big producers because independent weavers concentrated upon specialized, high grade silks which could not be produced upon factory power looms anyway. Moreover these small producers comprised a surplus labor pool to which work could be farmed out during a busy season without representing, during slacker times, capital overheads. Yet clearly other, and more important considerations were influencing manufacturers' attitudes. They reflected a concern to discipline hands to factory production; or at least avoid disruption resulting from artisan weavers non-compliance with power loom work. Thus,

"...we learn that this movement (of master and journey-men weavers) meets with the approval of and support of the employers, and undoubtedly in time those who approve themselves to the good opinion of the manufacturers will be helped in the purchase of machines, and the way be opened for better understanding and more cordial relations between employers and employed". <sup>1</sup>

The response of William Strange, the city's leading silk manufacturer, to scores of English weavers who were flooding into Paterson in 1880 indicates as much. "Manufacturers will not put on these immigrants who are swarming hither", he contended. "They are generally a 'bad set, a very bad set. They are so tainted with a communistic spirit that we prefer to have nothing to do with them". Thus, Strange continued, "most of these new arrivals work in small mills or set up looms of their own at home...."<sup>2</sup> It was an arrangement probably as preferable, where possible, to the immigrant weavers as to the manufacturers.

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<sup>1</sup> ibid, pp.153-4.

<sup>2</sup> New York Herald March 8 1880.

By the 1880s the jobbing trade was clearly doomed. Avoiding the mill could not prove a long term solution to the problem of factory discipline for either workers or employers. Improvements in the efficiency of power looms and in the quality of goods they produced, alone, put paid to the survival of the independent weaver. But even before these technological developments, and in spite of Strange's proclaimed attitude, Paterson millowners found they could not do without the dexterous hands and nimble fingers of experienced silkworkers. Thus, however reluctantly, immigrant weavers entered the city's mills.

The fitful adaption of immigrants to factory labor posed serious problems for Paterson millowners throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Manufacturers might boast that the development of silk manufacturing had "elevated the standard of labor", but numerous examples in the 1870s and 1880s of labor difficulties make such a picture appear fanciful.<sup>1</sup> The over-assertive millowner, who bragged to the Industrial Commission in 1900 that "...the celebrating of 'Blue Monday' is not in vogue", and that he would tolerate "...no German festivals (Scheutzenfeste and Saengerfeste); no 'blue' (idle) Mondays", was guilty of the same wishful thinking.<sup>2</sup> In pleading his case so stoutly he inevitably raised doubts as to its veracity. If, as late as the turn of the century, millowners were still mindful of the problems of absenteeism - and a form of absenteeism distinctly associated with the artisan backgrounds of their immigrant millhands - it is difficult to believe that it had not long before been of serious concern.

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<sup>1</sup>Shriner Paterson p.26.

<sup>2</sup>Ind.Comm. 1900 XIV p.727.



Absenteeism was directly related to the new discipline required by mechanized production, and resulted in constant friction on the shop floor. Immigrant workers refused to curtail customary work traditions, especially drinking habits, and chose to drop their work at will. Thus the traditional holiday of English silkworkers - the Macclesfield wakes - flourished in Paterson, as did the German singing festivals. Often these customary breaks were not limited to the ethnic group amongst whom they originated. In 1880, for example, during the May Day festival of the German singing societies, a riot broke out between Orange and Catholic Irish factions in the city, hardly the basses and tenors of the German choirs.<sup>1</sup>

Faced with the absence of a large group of workers from their mills manufacturers shut down the plant giving all other immigrants employed the day off. Thus, Pfingster, a Dutch holiday, was "...always religiously observed in silk city, the mills and shops being closed down".<sup>2</sup> At certain times of the year customary breaks could result in constant interruptions of production. A trade journal described the situation in May 1890:

"The month just closing was quite up to the average in the number of its holidays. It is a poor week that Paterson silk and other operatives do not manage to get at least one day for recreation. During May there was a holiday the great labor anniversary, to start with, on the 1st; next came Forepaugh, and no Paterson mill-hand, with a proper self-respect, can be kept at spinning-frame, or loom, when a circus is in town - it has been tried thoroughly; Pfingster Monday followed, and just at the close, Memorial Day occurs to finish up with. Of course the 'wheels of industry' must stand still while the thousands of operatives take a day off...." <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> New York Times May 3, 4, 5 and 6 1880, New York Tribune May 3 and 4 1880.

<sup>2</sup> American Silk Journal June 1892.

<sup>3</sup> ibid. May 1890.



Visits of circuses were indeed an enduring attraction to millhands and a frequent cause of absenteeism in the 1880s and 1890s. The arrival of a travelling show meant loom shops and throwing plants shutting shop for the day. Millowners had tried locking the doors of their workshops to prevent hands leaving work at the sound of a circus fanfare. But they were defeated. Millhands simply opened factory windows and climbed out. So determined were workers in this particular pursuit that by the twentieth century it was customary for mills to close when a circus came to town.<sup>1</sup>

Local unions and fraternal lodges also arranged regular excursions during the summer months, a feature most unwelcome to Paterson millowners. When silk manufacturer Fred Dale decided to circumvent the irregular habits of his workers by arranging an excursion for them in 1880 he was roundly denounced by his fellow millowners.<sup>2</sup> Two years later a German silk manufacturer, Grossenbacher, fired twenty eight of his workers for taking the day off to visit a circus in town.<sup>3</sup> Before the end of the decade, however, attitudes appear to have been changing. Aware that mass absences of workers on traditional holidays could not be stamped out, millowners organized their own, firm's outings, thus at least retaining the initiative and some measure of control over such stoppages.<sup>4</sup> The celebration

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian June 5 1905.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Labor Standard September 18 1880.

<sup>3</sup>ibid. May 20 1882.

<sup>4</sup>American Silk Journal July and August 1890.

of Labor Day, which originated amongst Paterson hands, was likewise given the sanction of employers and eventually the national government in the opening decade of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

Less benevolent were millowners' attitudes to other traditional workshop demands and practices. William Strange reflected a pervasive feeling amongst Paterson manufacturers when he complained of silkworkers: "They do not recognize the laws of the trade, when brought to bear upon their labor; but seem to be impressed with the idea that their employers are in duty bound to accede to their demands, however unjust".<sup>2</sup> It was the unwillingness of silkworkers to recognize the "laws of the trade" which resulted in almost continual battle between millowners and workers during the 1870s and 1880s. During the 1870s depression, for example, when there were "thousands" out of work in the city, silkworkers preferred unemployment to a return at reduced wages. Meetings of workingmen and "inflammatory speeches made from wagons and barrels" had aroused fears of a "bread riot" amongst city politicians and manufacturers, and both met hastily to find a means to avoid the expected trouble. But when the Mayor and Board of Aldermen negotiated with millowners to re-employ workers, at reduced wages to relieve distress, their efforts met with blank non-cooperation by the local workforce. Paterson workers "... would rather worry through the Winter, using up what little

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<sup>1</sup>J. Grossman "Who is the Father of Labor Day?" Labor History 14, No.4 1973, pp.612-623.

<sup>2</sup>Brockett The Silk Industry in America p.178.



they have been able to save, and borrowing from their friends, in hopes of having fair wages in the Spring".<sup>1</sup>

It was this same independence and distrust of millowners which provided the main impetus behind silkworkers' attempts to resist technological innovation in Paterson mills. Factory work, and in particular tending a mechanized loom, was a threat not only to weavers' wages and employment prospects but also to their status as skilled and independent artisans. Disputes surrounding the introduction of power looms in the 1870s were the hardly surprising result. They were followed in the 1880s by strikes against the new two-loom system, by which workers would operate two automatic looms, doubling output but neither wages nor future employment opportunities.<sup>2</sup> Both attempts at resistance were ultimately unsuccessful. More importantly the successful introduction of the power loom began to mark the demise of a skilled workforce hostile to the new disciplines of factory production. Within a decade apprenticeship was ended in the weaving shops, and with it workers' control of entry into their trade. Increasingly the tending of looms was meted out to unskilled and semi-skilled workers, often children and women.<sup>3</sup>

Thereafter silkworkers' resistance was expressed in covert and sometimes deviant forms. Theft of silk from the city's mills, by employees, was not uncommon.<sup>4</sup> In a city in which

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times November 24 and December 2 1873.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times January 14 1884; Macclesfield Courier and Herald February 2 and 17 1883.

<sup>3</sup>New York Times January 14 and February 13 1884; The Socialist January 27 1877.

<sup>4</sup>Paterson Labor Standard May 13 1882.



small independent workshops survived into the twentieth century there was a ready market for such contraband. In 1906 a weaver at the Ashley and Bailey mill was taken to court for stealing over \$300 worth of silk from his employers. Police discovered a loom in his house from which he plied a lucrative trade.<sup>1</sup> Eight years earlier at the annual dinner of the Silk Association of America an urgent telegram was received from a Paterson manufacturer "...relative to the operations of sneak thieves in stealing silk fabrics from the mills, and requesting co-operation in the effort to protect the interests of all concerned". Presumably some producers were encouraging thefts by buying stolen goods. But perhaps more important in accounting for this illicit trade was the long tradition of silk stealing that dated from the early industrialization of the English silk industry. Thefts of silk were common in Macclesfield and Coventry earlier in the century, and the ethos may well have been transferred to Paterson.<sup>3</sup> It was one way of supplementing a low income, may well have gratified disconsolate weavers, and perhaps small thefts were even regarded as a customary right. Certainly silk stealing did not raise indignation amongst Paterson workingmen comparable to that amongst their employers. Edward Cross and Sam Mulligan, two weavers sentenced to five years apiece for breaking into a mill, beating the proprietor

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<sup>1</sup> N.J.B.S. Twenty Ninth Annual Report 1906 p.527; Paterson Evening News October 12 1906.

<sup>2</sup> Silk Association of America Twenty Seventh Annual Report 1899 (New York, n.d.)

<sup>3</sup> Davies History of Macclesfield p.184, B. Weinberger "Crime and Police in the late Nineteenth Century: A Case Study from the Coventry Area" (M.A. dissertation, Warwick University 1976) pp.24-25.

and stealing silk, were shown "...considerable sympathy... by their fellow-workmen", when convicted in 1880.<sup>1</sup>

Ca'canny was also employed by workers to defy millowners or subvert the dictates of their machines.<sup>2</sup> A "go-slow" or tampering with machinery proved a simple and effective means of resisting millowners' insistence upon unstinting labor or equally of sabotaging attempts to "speed-up" production. Ca'canny was a favourite technique in the doubling rooms of Paterson mills, where "soaping the belt" ensured slow-running machinery. Similarly bobbins could be "oiled" for the same effect.<sup>3</sup>

Outright and malicious damage to millowners' plant and machinery, if less common, was not unheard of. In the spring of 1892, during industrial troubles in the mills, "...some unknown vandal or vandals...entered the Voorhis mill...and caused much damage by cutting warps from the looms and destroying everything right and left".<sup>4</sup> As nothing was reported stolen from the plant the action appears to have been the reprisal of bitter millhands. The same took place a year later in the Vermorel and Kimball dyeworks:

"During the panic of 1893...a body of strikers broke into the dyehouse and committed such serious acts of sabotage as to practically ruin the firm".<sup>5</sup>

A variant of such forms of ca'canny was the immediate

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times May 26 1880.

<sup>2</sup>For the origin and use of the term "ca'canny" see E. Partridge A Dictionary of Historical Slang (abdg.ed., London, 1972).

<sup>3</sup>American Silk Journal May 1890.

<sup>4</sup>ibid. April 1892.

<sup>5</sup>Heusser The History of the Silk Dyeing Industry p.231.



downing of tools by workers when a strike was called. Unfinished work was left to waste, a source of much anxiety to silk manufacturers. In 1875 William Strange made it a condition of employment that his workers sign a contract by which they were obliged to finish the warp they were weaving before quitting work. A recent strike in which much silk had been thus sabotaged provided the motive behind the contracts. Even so the contracts themselves suggested that this millowner's problems were of a longer-standing and less discrete nature. One of their principal clauses required: "That I will not, unless by consent of my employers or in case of sickness, absent myself from my work during mill hours". Presumably ca'canny and irregular work habits were closely related. Two years later Strange was taking out suits against weavers who had quit work in violation of the contracts and spoiled warps valued at over \$800 each.<sup>1</sup>

Millowners used contracts as a principal means of disciplining uncooperative workers. Written rules would hopefully teach immigrants the "laws of the trade" and refashion their casual work ethic. By the final decade of the century a trade journal noted that "...no workman may begin his toil until he has signed the manufacturers' code of laws, if not at once, after a few days trial".<sup>2</sup> Strict and often rigid regulations were common. In 1880 one millowner's work rules included the provision that:

"Any employee damaging or walking from loom to loom or any part of the shop during working hours will be

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<sup>1</sup>The Socialist July 7, 21 and 28 1877, New York Times July 10, 14, 17 and 21 1877.

<sup>2</sup>Textile America October 30 1897.



dismissed immediately...." 1

Movement from loom to loom could be simply restricted, but other cardinal "laws of the trade" were certainly more difficult to instill. One was the axiom "time is money", and its concomitant "time lost is money lost". Silkworkers' refusal to sacrifice customary workshop practices coupled with their opposition to a work routine conditioned by the pace of machinery, resulted in much lost time. Weavers absented themselves from the mills, or from their looms for what millowners often regarded as trivial reasons. Conversely the merest hint of slackness at work or absence from an appointed task enraged employers. In 1886, for example, silkworkers went back to work after a successful strike which had paralyzed the industry for several weeks. Their efforts upon their return did not satisfy their employers, however. Millowners complained that:

"Ever since the settlement of the strikes labor has been in an unquiet condition. The working people have spent their evenings in meetings and discussions prolonged to late hours, and in consequence have been less fit for work in the daytime. The practical result to the manufacturer has been an increased cost of labor in proportion to the amount of production". 2

Neither relief at the resumption of work nor resentment over concessions made were at the forefront of manufacturers' concerns; only the "fitness for work" of their employees.

"Fitness for work" plagued millowners' attitudes towards their workers. Some adopted an aggressive and capricious

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<sup>1</sup>The Labor Standard July 3 1880.

<sup>2</sup>Wyckoff American Silk Manufacture pp.66-7.

interpretation of what it constituted. The poet William Carlos Williams captured the pervasive spirit amongst Paterson silk bosses, when he pictured millowner Lambert stalking his factory:

"This is MY shop. I reserve the right (and he did) to walk down the row (between his looms) and fire any son-of-a-bitch I choose without excuse or reason more than that I don't like his face." <sup>1</sup>

Most millowners delegated their power to trusted servants. Foremen and overseers were the usual symbol of factory officialdom. They were obvious objects of contempt amongst millhands, and if too vigorous in their duties, could become sources of disruption. In 1905 girls in the winding room of the Bamford mill struck against a "too domineering" foreman.<sup>2</sup> Invariably during disputes superintendents and overseers were targets of strikers' objection.

Ultimately loss of wages was the millowners' most effective weapon in combatting uncooperative workers. Fines were used to induce accurate and regular work habits. In the 1880s an English weaver, writing home to Macclesfield, complained of the "enormous fines" imposed "for the most trifling defects in weaving".<sup>3</sup> Payment by the piece was extensive in the weaving branches of the industry, again to discipline wayward hands.

Piece payment, if a partial solution to millowners' problems, could rebound on them with a vengeance. During a strike in 1884 weavers demanded payment during "idle time" -

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<sup>1</sup>Williams Paterson p.99.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian May 20 1905.

<sup>3</sup>Macclesfield Courier and Herald February 17 1883.

the period during which their looms were being "fixed" ready to resume production - traditionally a break in which weavers could do as they pleased. If "time is money" millhands were clear about who was paying for it. They asked for twenty five cents an hour recompense. The response of manufacturers was characteristically hostile, but nevertheless revealing. A millowner explained that if such payments were made

"...there would be scores of weavers who would be constantly disarranging their looms in order to have a chance to spend their money and time in beer saloons, while they would be drawing pay at \$2.50 per day for idling...." <sup>1</sup>

The premises of manufacturers, even when adopted by the weavers in presenting their case, were clearly not the basis for a common outlook between the two.

Aside from fines and piece payments dismissal was used to discipline workers. Instant dismissal was usual if a worker was discovered not to be at his or her loom at the appointed hour. It proved the most effective check on "Blue Mondays".<sup>2</sup> Moreover with the increasing mechanization of silk production in the 1880s the threat of replacement by cheap female and child labor or imported "green" hands must have weighed heavily with dissident weavers.

Female and child labor had been fundamental to the rise of the early Paterson silk industry. But with the widespread adoption of mechanization in the 1870s and 1880s it assumed a

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times January 20 1884.

<sup>2</sup>Ind. Comm. 1900 XIV p.675.



new importance for millowners, directly related to the struggle against uncooperative weavers. Earlier they were employed principally in the preparatory stages of production - winding, cleaning and doubling. During the 1880s and 1890s increasing numbers were tending looms.<sup>1</sup> Strikes against female weavers reflected their new functions, but did not preserve weaving as a male domain.<sup>2</sup>

There is good reason to suppose that child and female labor was preferred by millowners. Such workers were unlikely to bring to the mill the jealously guarded traditions of independence and status common amongst male immigrant weavers. Most had little or no first-hand experience in the industry. Millowners could expect to find them more tractable and adaptable to mechanization. Taken on as "learners, who are expected to work for the first two weeks free, after which time we start them at 50c. per week", children and young women could easily be fired if they failed to reach the required levels of "efficiency".<sup>3</sup>

This workforce of women and children may have brought positive disciplinary attributes into the mills. Family and kinship guidance possibly proved a more useful and efficient corrective to slacking and absenteeism that any foreman or supervisor could hope to impose. Although the extent of kinship

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<sup>1</sup>Textile America November 13 1897.

<sup>2</sup>American Silk Journal March, May 1890; Paterson Daily Press February 27 1890; Paterson Daily Guardian April 23 1886; NJBS Twenty Fourth Annual Report 1901 p.430.

<sup>3</sup>Textile America October 31 1898.

networks within the mills is unknown, their existence can surely have not been uncommon. An English female silk finisher who came to Paterson in 1890 took her twelve year old son into the mill with her.<sup>1</sup> Similarly early "boosters" of the silk industry made much of the prospect for employment of the whole family within the city's mills.<sup>2</sup> In such circumstances the guiding or chastising hand of a parent, older brother or sister was probably a useful adjunct to manufacturers' work rules, fines and threats of dismissal.

Yet the employment of women and children did not entirely rid silk manufacturers of the annoying habits of immigrant hands. While apprenticeship was maintained in a few skilled branches of the industry older silkworkers likely passed on their customary work routines to their "learners". Where not it seems likely that they, an older and more experienced generation, may have acted as peers to younger members of the workforce, colouring learners' adjustment to factory employment and sustaining some features of the traditional routines.

The employment of a high proportion of children and adolescents likely, and ironically raised new problems of discipline in the workplace. Factory life could scarcely have been but boring and grinding for the young. Communal singing to the rhythms of the looms was a traditional means of regulating this tedium.<sup>3</sup> Even so, temptations to skip work, or distractions

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<sup>1</sup>American Silk Journal May 1890.

<sup>2</sup>New York Daily Tribune September 25 1880, Brockett The Silk Industry in America p.115; Wyckoff American Silk Manufacture pp. 9, 73; Wright A Centennial Tour p.26.

<sup>3</sup>R.J. Vecoli The Peoples of New Jersey (Princeton, 1965) pp.73-75. M. Most "The 1913 Silk Strike Terror", Bergen Record September 30 1973.



within the factory, despite the watchful eyes of kin, overseers, foremen and the like, must have been tantalising. The enduring fascination of visiting circuses for Paterson factory hands presumably stemmed from the young element in the mills.

The response of millowners to the disciplining of children and adolescents was equally consistent with that shown to artisan weavers. Women and children were stamped on, if at all, even more rigorously than men for irregularities at work. Fines, dismissal and even physical assault were resorted to. In 1882 millowner Bannigan dismissed a young female employee who had been absent from work for three days on account of a family bereavement.<sup>1</sup> Her dismissal was hardly unique in its severity. It certainly did not match that meted out by silk manufacturer Joseph Bamford to a young girl in his employ in 1890. The girl, Antonia Fischer had returned to work after illness. When

"...she presented herself at the mill...Bamford took her to task for remaining away...seized her by the arm roughly, and told her to get out. The girl was prepared to do so, but asked for three days salary due to her, when...Bamford again took hold of her and threw her bodily out of the mill, tearing her clothing after which he threw her working dress into the street after her".<sup>2</sup>

Charged with "assault and battery" Bamford was found guilty by a local court and fined £5 with costs. Indignant silkworkers held a meeting at which "the alleged brutal treatment" was discussed for "over an hour". There were reports

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Labor Standard May 20 1882.

<sup>2</sup>American Silk Journal October 1890.



that assaults on millworkers were "of every day occurrence". Praising Miss Fischer for her "courage to go before the courts",

"Several persons reported that assaults were committed on other occasions, but that the girls were afraid to make complaints before the courts". 1

Employing the young was apparently not a completely satisfactory resolution to the problem of industrial discipline. The recruitment of "green" hands reflected its persistence. A constant supply of newly arrived immigrant workers was actively cultivated by silk manufacturers throughout the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Even after the passage of the Foran Act in the 1880s Paterson millowners regularly flouted the ban on contract labor.<sup>2</sup>

A plentiful supply of immigrant labor could be used to give added weight to threats of dismissal and to divide a workforce resisting new work procedures. As early as 1876 differential wages resulted in hostility between French, German and English weavers, causing local workingmen to denounce their employers. "How dare you speak of 'unjust measures'", complained silkworkers, "when you make distinctions on account of nationality". "For a long time past", millhands explained, "...it has been the policy of these gentlemen to arouse feelings of hostility between these different nationalities, in order to attack them in detail, beat them..."<sup>3</sup> Four years later, at a

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<sup>1</sup>The American Silk Journal November, December 1890.

<sup>2</sup>Baker's Journal August 18 1888, April 20 1889, American Silk Journal April, August 1890; Commissioners of Immigration 1892 I pp.124, II pp.68-100.

<sup>3</sup>The Socialist May 6 1876.

time of acute depression in the silk trade, silkworkers protested against the continuing traffic of English "sparrows" to the city, who "...can live on bread and porridge, whereas we are accustomed to meat three times a day".<sup>1</sup> New arrivals, often penniless, were usually anxious to secure employment immediately. They formed a pool of pliant and cheap labor - "a class of weavers which is outside of unionism and shows a disposition to work all night as well as all day".<sup>2</sup> In this context the cheapness of labor and the problems of industrial discipline were closely interwoven.

Imported labor and newly arrived immigrants were consciously used by manufacturers to discipline the workforce. In 1884, during a strike over apprenticeship, millowners declared their intention to take on "learners" as they pleased, to "...train up a class of American hands who will be free from the socialistic doctrines of the foreign weavers".<sup>3</sup> In fact there is little evidence to suggest that millowners took this intention very seriously. Native Americans never entered the mills in great numbers nor was there much concerted attempt by silk manufacturers to encourage them. Clearly by "foreign" millowners meant something other than European immigrants. Foreign-born labor was, on the contrary, used for the very purpose of ridding mills of dependence upon uncooperative workers.<sup>4</sup> "American hands", it seems, were those, of whatever nationality,

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<sup>1</sup>New York Herald March 8 1880.

<sup>2</sup>American Silk Journal June 1890.

<sup>3</sup>New York Times February 13 1884.

<sup>4</sup>See for example the use of Turks and Armenians for this purpose during strikes in 1890. American Silk Journal May 1890.

who willing to submit or unable to effectively resist the dictates of factory masters. Conversely "un-American" or "foreign" were workers who submitted less easily.

On the shop floor millowners could more squarely confront the problems of disciplining their workforce by adroit use of immigrant hands. Workers of one nationality would be used as "pacemakers" - given good quality silks or simple designs to facilitate speedy output - in order to set standards of productivity which the rest of the plant could not hope to match. Prodding and scolding followed as rivalries were established between groups of workers.<sup>1</sup> More important to millowners, standards of regular, rapid and unrelenting production were set.

Millowners believed new immigrants to be more easily moulded to their demands. "When I get a new man who comes over here, he is green", silk dyer Jacob Weidmann explained

"...and it takes him some time to get worked in; but after he has been here five or ten years he is just as good as any of them, and he will turn out in our factory in Paterson one third more work than when he first came".<sup>2</sup>

If "green" hands did not reach the required level of efficiency, Weidmann made clear, it was not the millowner who suffered. "The laborers we take in from the street", he continued, "we take them in for a time of three months and if we can make fair hands of them, to handle silk, they get \$9 a week". If hands could not be easily trained dismissal was apparently their saving grace.

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<sup>1</sup>CIR III pp. 2586-2587, 2595-2596.

<sup>2</sup>Ind. Comm. 1900 XIV p.704.



In the long term immigrant labor had a more disconcerting effect on manufacturers. The malleable qualities of green hands did not usually endure beyond initial training and settlement in the city. Thus alongside the use of immigrants as a means of cowing and disciplining the workforce are the frequent complaints of manufacturers about the "socialistic doctrines of foreign weavers". With them immigrant millhands brought their own work traditions, as had the weavers who preceded them. More often than not these customs proved inimical to the will of millowners. It was "foreigners", a manufacturer explained, who were intent upon fostering a spirit of resistance to the demands of their employers. "A feeling of self-preservation, which keeps up their interests and also brings together the laborers of the same nationality", he continued "...has misled them...into demonstrations very much against their advantage".<sup>1</sup> Among them the "unadulterated gospel of communism" could expect a sympathetic hearing, for they were "restless, unreasoning and excitable".<sup>2</sup>

Here again the attack on "foreigners" is revealing in its double-meaning. For millowners the term simply denotes people resistant to mill life, who were likely by a feeling of "self-preservation" to "keep up their own interests" and, especially grieving to manufacturers, to band together in defence of these interests. The ambiguous and at times contradictory use of the terms "foreign" and "American" was not entirely fortuitous.

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<sup>1</sup> ibid. p.676

<sup>2</sup> New York Times August 8 1877, American Silk Journal June 1892.

By encouraging immigrant labor to Paterson millowners, in fact, negated their interest in establishing a stable and disciplined workforce. To be sure, in the short term new arrivals might solve particular problems of individual factory owners. Shortage of skilled and experienced hands, resistance by workers to technological change, or simply disputes and non-cooperation within mills could all favour the introduction of new immigrant labor. In the long term however, the effect of immigration constantly replenished a workforce to whom factory life was novel; people hostile or reluctant to accept new industrial discipline; indeed, "foreigners" to it. Unlike Britain, where by the final third of the nineteenth century a relatively stable and disciplined factory workforce had emerged - at least in principal industries such as cotton - American cities like Paterson followed a divergent path. Successive waves of immigration made the impact of industrialization uneven in its timing and prevented a similar development. As one immigrant group replaced another to become the principal workers in Paterson mills so the problems of adjustment to the factory were replicated.<sup>1</sup> It was a recurrent and persistent feature of the city's principal industry from the 1860s through to the First World War, and had striking effects upon both industrial and social conditions in Paterson.

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<sup>1</sup>H.G. Gutman "Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America 1815-1919" American Historical Review 78, June 1973 pp.531-588.

### Chapter Three

#### ORGANIZATION AND RESISTANCE

The uneven impact of industrialization upon Paterson workers profoundly influenced the form and quality of the city's working class movement during the last decades of the nineteenth century. There was no single or even dominant response to the experience of industrial life. The silkworkers' attitudes were at best ambiguous and at times they revealed sharply conflicting responses. At the root of this ambiguity lay the constant immigration into the city.

On the one hand, some workingmen in the city - more often than not skilled workers with some measure of protection against the arbitrary rule of employers and against the importation of "green" labor - accepted the industrial system, albeit with strong reservations. They sought to humanize it, actively organizing for their own protection and lobbying for a range of legislative measures designed to further the interests of workingmen and curb the excesses of factory lords.

In contrast, the dominant response of the city's silk workers was more "primitive". They lacked a clear conception of their status and role in an industrial system. They had not yet accepted the "rules of the game". In consequence, during periods of crisis, they reverted to traditional forms of defence, usually riot and disorder. Their actions manifested a blanket refusal to endorse the rights or the legitimacy of the city's silk barons. Paterson's silkworkers could often expect and



receive widespread support for their actions. For one thing industrialism was new to the city and regarded by many as disruptive. Millhands were not alone in opposing the new factories and their masters. Secondly, and in contrast to the novel features of the silk industry, the city's political structure predated industrialism. It was fashioned by traditional notions of participatory democracy and this had important consequences for the social and political influence of both millowners and their workers. To the frustration of manufacturers, Paterson politicians typically responded to popular pressure, enabling workingmen to voice, loud and clear, their discontents.

In the summer of 1876, James Patrick McDonnell, editor of *The Socialist*, a radical New York journal, addressed William Strange, Paterson's leading silk manufacturer:

"You recognize the rights of men do you? You recognize the right of a man to support a wife and six children upon a dollar a day; but suppose he has not got the might, what becomes of the right? You have the might, they have the right. You speak of invoking the law. Have a care Mr Strange. Be not too eager to use the law as an engine of oppression, lest the oppressed lose their respect for the law, and when that takes place - what then? Well, we shall see!" <sup>1</sup>

McDonnell, soon to move to Paterson where he was the outspoken champion of the city's workingmen for the remainder of his life, articulated a familiar moral indignation in his attack on millowner Strange. His warning of the possible calamities should "the oppressed lose their respect for the law",

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<sup>1</sup>The Socialist May 6 1876.

served as a reminder to himself as much as to Paterson's mill-owners. A vision of enraged lawlessness, spawned by manufacturers' gross contempt for the rights of their workers, was to inform his life's work. With scant resources and aided by a mere handful of followers, McDonnell worked tirelessly to reform and humanize the burgeoning industrialism in cities such as Paterson. His aim was to obtain legal guarantees for the rights of working people to provide a constitutional framework within which workers would be afforded some protection from the harshness of the new factory barons. The route that McDonnell travelled in this quest is indicative of a strong current of feeling amongst Paterson's working class during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

McDonnell arrived in the United States in 1873, already an active radical. Born of middle class parents in Dublin in 1847, McDonnell displayed a rebellious nature from an early age. In 1862, fifteen years old, he fell foul of his superiors at Dublin University for his support of Irish Nationalism. He left to join the editorial team of the United Irishman and later the Irish People, both Nationalist journals. Arrest and imprisonment followed as the British government suppressed the Irish rebels. McDonnell was not deterred. Even his father's investment in a cordage business, which young James Patrick managed for a short time, could not deflect him from his commitment to radical politics. In 1868, after years of harassment by Irish police, McDonnell left Dublin for London.

In London, McDonnell immediately plunged into the turmoil of radical and working class politics. The experience influenced



him profoundly broadening his horizons beyond mere nationalism. Whilst working for the Irish cause in London he came into contact with the city's circle of British and European radicals, including Marx, Engels, and other socialists and trade unionists. His activities diversified, leading him to take up the cause of the Paris Communards, the International Workingmen's Association, and the demonstrations for free speech in London's parks. Again prosecutions followed, but for McDonnell the experience was rewarding.

McDonnell left England in late 1872, ostensibly to expose the terrible steerage conditions of trans-atlantic emigrant ships. Upon arrival in New York McDonnell's passion for radical politics soon embroiled him in the struggles of New York's tiny socialist community. For the next four years his life was devoted to propaganda and editorial work. The Socialist (later the New York Labor Standard), a Marxist weekly journal, was his chief vehicle of expression. He also spoke throughout New England and the Atlantic states and it was on these tours that McDonnell first made contact with Paterson's textile workers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For a succinct review of McDonnell's background and career see H.G. Gutman's "Class, Status and the Gilded-Age Radical: A Reconsideration, The Case of a New Jersey Socialist" in H.G. Gutman and G.S. Kealey Many Past: Readings in American Social History II 1865 - Present (Englewood Cliffs, 1973) pp.125-151. On McDonnell's early years see Press Clippings in Subject File, J.P. McDonnell Papers (State Historical Society, Wisconsin), R.J. Harrison Before The Socialists (London, 1965); H. Collins "The English Branches of the First International" in A. Briggs and J. Saville ed. Essays in Labor History (London, 1960) pp.242-275. An indication of McDonnell's varied activities during the 1870s can be gleaned from P.S. Foner History of the Labour Movement in the United States I pp.452-3, 493 and J.R. Commons et.al. A Documentary History of American Industrial Society IX pp.30, 46, 378. See also "J.P. McDonnell" in the Fifteenth Annual Report and Proceedings of the New Jersey Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions 1893 (n.d., n.p.)



Between 1877 and 1880 McDonnell became the celebrated spokesman of Paterson's wage-earners.<sup>1</sup> In 1876 and 1877 he was frequently in the city to address meetings of striking weavers, attack millowners and try to organize a union of textile workers.<sup>2</sup> Fined in 1878 for labelling strikebreakers "scabs" and jailed in 1880 for libel after exposing working conditions in a Passaic County brickyard, McDonnell became the bête noire of Paterson manufacturers. His dramatic intervention in the city's industrial upheavals caused others less concern. Crowds of workingmen marched through the streets of Paterson, howling and jeering at millowners and strikebreakers to acclaim McDonnell. So intense was community support for him during the trial and imprisonment in 1880 that upon his release a vast celebration was arranged. A marching band led McDonnell, triumphant, through the city's streets to attend a banquet at which the hero was presented with a gold watch.<sup>3</sup>

By the time of his first trial in 1878, McDonnell was a permanent resident in Paterson. He changed the name of his journal to the Paterson Labor Standard and henceforth concentrated his attention on the lot of New Jersey's workingmen. Under the auspices of the International Labor Union McDonnell attempted repeatedly to organize Paterson's silkworkers.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gutman ibid., and his earlier "Class, Status and Community Power in Nineteenth Century American Industrial Cities - Paterson, New Jersey: A Case Study" in F.C. Jaher ed. The Age of Industrialism: Essays in Social Structure and Cultural Values (New York, 1968) pp.263-287.

<sup>2</sup>The Socialist May 13, July 8 1876; The Labor Standard September 2 1876, April 21, July 21 and December 9 1877.

<sup>3</sup>The Labor Standard October 26, November 2 1878, October 11 1879, March 13, April 10 1880. Paterson Labor Standard November 23 1878, March 13 and 20 1880. See also McDonnell's diary for 1880 in J.P. McDonnell Papers.

<sup>4</sup>The International Labor Union, founded by McDonnell and a group of supporters in New York City, was an outgrowth of the First International.

His efforts were of little avail, Despite bitter and lengthy strikes during 1877 and 1878, McDonnell lamented the lack of organization amongst the city's workers.<sup>1</sup> His call to "build your union on benevolent and protective principles" apparently fell on deaf ears.<sup>2</sup> Paterson's millhands were certainly active in resisting threats to their customary work routines or living standards. But they showed little inclination to organize permanently.

During the 1880s McDonnell continued his efforts to establish organization amongst Paterson's workers and wage-earners throughout New Jersey. Aided by a handful of local activists he was the guiding light behind the Passaic County Trades Assembly founded to co-ordinate the actions and influence of the city's workers. He was active at the state level. Samuel Gompers appointed McDonnell the American Federation of Labor's General Organizer in New Jersey. More importantly McDonnell was elected chairman of the New Jersey Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions in 1883, a position he retained until 1897. His work for the N.J. Federation, chiefly organizing and lobbying for legislation favourable to workingmen, was to achieve considerable recognition and respect for the former rebel. Whether in the local or state setting McDonnell, in many respects, typified a generation of trade unionists and labor

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<sup>1</sup>The Labor Standard December 13 1879, Paterson Labor Standard March 25 1882.

<sup>2</sup>The Labor Standard April 14 1877.



activists anxious to make their presence felt in shaping the growing industrial cities of New Jersey.

Within Paterson, McDonnell's attempts to organize the city's silkworkers continued to fail. Despite major strikes in 1884, 1886, 1887, 1889 and 1894, no permanent organization emerged.<sup>1</sup> The International Labor Union, into which McDonnell had tried to organize striking millworkers in the late '70s, had a brief revival in 1883-1884, sending representatives to the state federation's annual sessions, but was soon defunct.<sup>2</sup> Two years later when a spate of strikes disrupted the city's industry for almost the whole year it was the Knights of Labor, assisted by McDonnell, who were organizing locals amongst Paterson's textile hands. They in turn disappeared almost as rapidly as previous unions. The rapid demise of the Knights in Paterson paralleled that of the national organization. Successfully led strikes by the Knights in 1886 were followed by dismal failures the following year.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter it was small craft unions of the highly skilled which characterized organization amongst Paterson's silkworkers.

In 1889, the loomfixers and twisters withdrew from the remnants of the Knights' local Textile Workers' Assembly to form the Silk Loomfixers and Twisters Benevolent and Protective Association. Shortly afterwards the horizontal warpers formed a similar benevolent association, as did the city's ribbon weavers. The vast remainder of the silk labor

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1 J.E. Wood "History of Labor in the Broad Silk Industry of Paterson, New Jersey" (Ph.D., University of California, 1941). appendix B pp575-578.

2 Report of the Fifth Annual Session of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the State of New Jersey 1883 (Paterson, 1883) p.2, and Sixth Annual Session 1884 p.1-2.

3 NJBS Tenth Annual Report 1887 pp.224-225, 262-265.



force remained unorganized.<sup>1</sup> Only for brief interludes did organization take place amongst the lesser skilled. It was usually in response to a crisis in the industry and strikes. Thus in the late 1890s broad silk weavers were organized. Similarly in 1902 the United Dyers, Helpers and Finishers was launched. Neither endured.<sup>2</sup>

McDonnell's success and support in the 1880s and 1890s can hardly be attributed to organized assistance from Paterson's textile hands. To be sure, his efforts, both in organizing workers and in lobbying for labor legislation, reflected a concern for the city's silkworkers. But it was predominantly the skilled workers in craft unions who provided the backbone of support for the local trades assembly and city representation in the state federation. Paterson's most consistent representatives at the state federation meetings were from the cigar-makers, carpenters, typographical and electrical workers' unions in the city. It was their interests, under the guiding hand of McDonnell, which most clearly shaped the development and programmes of the federation. Their influence, because of their craft union background, should not be seen exclusively as a conservatizing influence on McDonnell and the policies of the federation, for some had followed similar, if less spectacular, paths to McDonnell in their response to the development of industrial society. They shared with him a belief in the permanence of modern industry, and following from this a belief in the necessity of workers' organization to reform

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<sup>1</sup>Wood "History of Labor" pp.154-5.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. pp.164-6, 187-188.

and humanize such a system.

Samuel Sigley, secretary of the Passaic County Trades Assembly in the 1880s and later a vice-President of the New Jersey Federation of Trades Unions, was such a man. Born in Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire, in 1821, Sigley's radical sympathies were evident from an early age. An ardent and active Chartist Sigley was imprisoned and in 1848, charged with treason, he fled to the United States. Although a house-painter by trade, Sigley worked tirelessly with McDonnell in his struggle with Paterson's millowners in the 1870s. He was president of the National Painters' Union and a prominent figure in both Passaic County and New Jersey labor movements.<sup>1</sup> Sam Holt, president of the Paterson lodge of the Carpenters union, was another McDonnell ally both locally and in the state organization. Born in Paterson in 1842 and educated in the city's public schools, Holt became treasurer of the local trades assembly and a delegate to the New Jersey Federation in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>2</sup> George McNeill possessed similar credentials. This Massachusetts born reformer was an old time associate of McDonnell's, who had lived in Paterson and edited McDonnell's journal during his imprisonment in 1880. An ex-mill hand, ardent abolitionist, and later union organizer and Eight Hour reformer McNeill's activities were centred in Boston. Here he organized the Massachusetts Mutual Accident

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<sup>1</sup>"Samuel Sigley" in Report and Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Congress of the Federation of Trades and Labor Unions of the State of New Jersey 1895 (Jersey City, n.d.), National Labor Standard December 21 1899.

<sup>2</sup>"Samuel Holt" Report and Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual Congress of the Federation of Trades and Labor Unions of the State of New Jersey 1893 (Jersey City, n.d.)



Association, an insurance company for workingmen in the 1880s, and pioneered factory and reform legislation in the Commonwealth. McNeill remained a loyal supporter of McDonnell's and gave his efforts publicity.<sup>1</sup> So too union organizers and reformers such as John Swinton, George Gunton, T.V. Powderley and, perhaps most important, Samuel Gompers were all associates and publicists for McDonnell and the state federation.<sup>2</sup> They comprised a group of activists, who having experienced the advent of the factory and the transformation of cities such as Paterson, had resolved to humanize and control industrialism in their own interests. Their outlook clearly influenced the emergent state federation of labor.

Between 1883 and 1892 work by the legislative committee of the New Jersey Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions achieved the passage of a substantial body of reform and labor measures in the State legislature. The progress of the federation, founded in 1879 by local Knights of Labor, had been slow prior to the mid 1880s. A state Bureau of Labor and Industries had been established to investigate and report annually on industrial conditions, the truck system of payment had been abolished, and a conspiracy law hampering union organization and activity amended. In 1883 McDonnell's influence

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<sup>1</sup> Biographical sketch of McNeill in "Subject File", J.P. McDonnell Papers, National Labor Standard September 7 1899.

<sup>2</sup> American Silk Journal April 1890. See McDonnell's remarks at the Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Congress of the Federation of Trades and Labor Unions of New Jersey 1895, and letters of Gunton to McDonnell, February 8 1897, and McNeill to McDonnell, December 4 1897 in "Correspondence", J.P. McDonnell Papers.



in the federation began to be felt, as he re-organized the body and became chairman of its Committee on Permanent Organization and its Legislative Committee.<sup>1</sup>

Henceforth labor legislation followed much more quickly. In 1883 and 1884 child labor was restricted in the state, the employment of females brought under stricter control, the wages of state employees was raised, prison contract labor was abolished and a tenant protection act passed. It was followed in 1885 by a General Factory act, with supplements to it in 1886, 1887, 1889, 1890 and 1893. Amongst other things the act and its supplements covered working conditions, the employment of women and children, "sweated" labor and the provision of an enlarged factory inspectorate to enforce the state's labor legislation. A compulsory education bill was another of the federation's major achievements, along with the establishment in 1892 of a State Board of Arbitration to mediate in industrial disputes, and a shorter hours bill limiting the working week to fifty five hours.<sup>2</sup>

Such a body of reform legislation must rank as a considerable success for McDonnell and the federation. It had been achieved in accordance with the classic role assigned to labor as a lobbying power, first espoused by the British Trade Union

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<sup>1</sup>L. Troy Organized Labor in New Jersey (Princeton, 1965) pp 52-56, 58-63 and see McDonnell's remarks at the annual gathering in 1883 in the Report of the Fifth Annual Congress 1883 p.2.

<sup>2</sup>For a summary of the Federation's programme and achievements see McDonnell's review of the years 1879-1892 in the Report of the Fifteenth Annual Congress 1893 n.p., and "General Business Papers 1872-1892" in J.P. McDonnell Papers.

Congress during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The British model undoubtedly influenced McDonnell and the development of the New Jersey federation just as it had Sam Gompers. Indeed, McDonnell's early associations with British labor leaders and his regular reports on the British trade union movement in the Paterson Labor Standard point clearly to the connection.<sup>1</sup> More importantly he found that such a policy could guarantee considerable gains for labor in a fluid political system. If organized labor lacked enough weight nationally to influence legislation during the Gilded Age, at the local level it could exert considerable persuasion.

"Reward your friends and punish your enemies" was McDonnell's watchword throughout the 1880s and 1890s. "That the organized labor of this State is recognized by the legislators as a force too potent to be disregarded is very apparent, and that its power is rapidly increasing cannot be denied", McDonnell expounded to the federation in 1886.<sup>2</sup> Seven years later, after the successful passage of numerous reform and labor measures, McDonnell's position remained unchanged. "The organized workingmen of New Jersey hold the political balance of power", he reiterated in 1893, "and if they fail to use it well and wisely they will deserve all the misery that their folly will bring upon them".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Labor Standard June 17 1882 for an example.

<sup>2</sup>Report of the Eighth Annual Congress 1886 p.13.

<sup>3</sup>Report of the Fifteenth Annual Congress 1893 n.p.



The balance of power that McDonnell and his colleagues placed their faith in certainly exerted considerable influence upon the state legislature. Assemblymen and senators were circularised with labor's demands, and given the endorsement of the New Jersey Federation upon agreement to introduce or support labor legislation.<sup>1</sup> Praise was not stinted if labor legislation was forthcoming and conversely active campaigns were launched against opponents of workingmen and the federation's legislative aims.<sup>2</sup> The party affiliation of candidates was of little concern to the federation, only their commitment to the interests of workingmen. Thus, in 1881, McDonnell could urge both the election of Thomas Flynn, candidate of the Irish Democrat machine, and Jo Greaves, local Republican, as assemblymen for the Paterson area.<sup>3</sup>

During the 1880s and 1890s the interests of organized labor in Passaic County were well served through the efforts of McDonnell and the local trades assembly to elect sympathetic representatives. In industrial cities, like Paterson, local political machines were, of necessity, sensitive to the concerns of workingmen. Thus they threw up candidates such as Tom Flynn, elected a state assemblyman for four successive terms in the 1880s and again in 1892, 1893 and 1894. Flynn, born locally of Irish parents, had strong roots in the predominantly Irish and working class section of south Paterson.

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<sup>1</sup>See the circulars of 1889 and 1895, for example, and T. Lane to J.P. McDonnell November 12 1892 in "Correspondence" J.P. McDonnell Papers.

<sup>2</sup>Report of the Fifth Annual Congress 1883 p.3, Paterson Labor Standard November 24 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Paterson Labor Standard October 15 and 22 1881.



He had worked as a machinist and later as a liquor dealer in the city. Early in his career at Trenton, Flynn took up labor's cause, sponsoring a bill to guarantee workingmen a one hour dinner break.<sup>1</sup> The apex of his service to McDonnell and the city's working class voters was undoubtedly his campaign in the early 1890s to limit the working week in New Jersey to fifty five hours - the success of which earned him the nickname "Fifty Five Hour Flynn".<sup>2</sup>

Flynn's was hardly untypical of the support local activists expected and obtained. James Keys, elected to the state assembly in 1887 and again in 1888, was in a similar, if less successful, mould. Irish born and a former iron moulder in the Rogers Locomotive plant, Keys worked as a self-employed boatman and local agent for Paterson brickworks and breweries. Described in the state legislative manual as a man whose "...sympathies are decidedly on the side of those who labor for a living" Keys took an active interest in workingmen's interests, serving on the legislature's Committee on Labor and Industries and later as a state Deputy Factory Inspector in Passaic County.<sup>3</sup> Tom McCran, again Irish born, and elected to the legislature in 1889 on a Republican ticket, was another of McDonnell's allies. McCran had been a labourer in New Jersey,

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Labor Standard March 25 1882.

<sup>2</sup>New Jersey Legislature Manual of the Legislature of New Jersey 1894 (Trenton, 1894) pp.238-9.(hereafter Legislature of N.J.); Paterson Evening News October 26 1893, Report of the Fifteenth Annual Congress 1893 n.p.

<sup>3</sup>Legislature of N.J. 1889 pp.230-231, Paterson Daily Press July 5 1892.

railroad navvy in the West and cotton picker in the Deep South before establishing his own hide and tallow factory in Passaic County. McCran it was who received the local trade assembly's backing in the 1889 election, and in return introduced a bill at Trenton limiting the working day to eight hours.

McDonnell's legislative campaigners from Passaic County, if often of humble origins, were seldom formally attached to local unions. They were machine candidates, reliant on workingmen's votes and reflecting the aspirations of their constituents.<sup>1</sup>

Sam Bullock was an exception. A Macclesfield born silk twister, he was elected on a Republican ticket in 1894, and re-elected on an Independent slate the following year. Bullock, an ardent trade unionist, had been active in the local assembly of the Knights of Labor during the 1880s, and at the time of his election was a prominent figure in the Loomfixers' and Twisters' union. He, like Keys, served his time in Trenton on the state's Committee on Labor and Industries.<sup>2</sup> Other trade unionists were John Donohue and Robert Carroll, both elected on a Labor Democrat ticket to the state assembly in 1886. Donohue, born in Wales of Irish parents, was a former silk worker now a printer by trade. He had been active in Knights of Labor local and was the regular representative of his union at the New Jersey Federation's annual sessions. Carroll, American born and a brass finisher, was likewise an active unionist. Both were swept into office on the tide of sentiment

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<sup>1</sup>See S.P. Hays' suggestive article "Political Parties and the Community-Society Continuum" in W.N. Chambers and J. Burnham The American Party Systems (New York, 1967) pp.152-181.

<sup>2</sup>Legislature of N.J. 1895 pp.246-247.



surrounding the Knights of Labor's success in the city in 1886, and with the tacit support of the local Democratic machine. Yet their term of office was remarkable only for its lack of success. The following year they were unable to sustain an independent Labor platform. Donohue, standing again on a Labor ticket against a Democrat and a Republican, was soundly defeated. Carroll, adopted by the Democrats, suffered the same fate. Their eclipse was hardly surprising - a fact that the Irish World had noted soon after their election in 1886 - for the local political machine could accommodate their demands quite comfortably.<sup>1</sup>

The most eminent, and in some respects most surprising of McDonnell's supporters in the state legislature was Garret Hobart, an assemblyman and state senator in the 1870s and 1880s, chairman of the New Jersey Republican Party and later Vice-President under William McKinley. Hobart was of old Puritan stock. He had been educated at Rutgers University and trained in law. A former counsel to the Paterson city government, by the 1880s Hobart was a leading corporation lawyer with directorships on many of New Jersey's leading banks, railroads, and manufacturing concerns. His background and interests notwithstanding, Hobart received glowing and repeated praise from McDonnell for his efforts to promote labor and social reform.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Legislature of N.J. 1887 pp.204-06, Legislature of N.J. 1889 pp.228-230, Irish World and American Industrial Liberator April 9 1887, October 8 1887.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Labor Standard November 2 1889, October 31 1896.



The two had been associated almost from the time of McDonnell's arrival in Paterson. Hobart's father-in-law, Socrates Tuttle, was the lawyer who defended McDonnell during his celebrated trials in 1880. McDonnell and Hobart maintained friendship from that date on. In a glowing obituary of the vice-President McDonnell lamented the passing of a man "...always ready to aid the side of the weak and oppressed".<sup>1</sup>

Although men such as Flynn and Hobart provided valuable support for organized labor's legislative programme, the real key to McDonnell's and the federation's success was the election of a favourable state governor, who would press workingmen's demands and engineer their passage through the legislative chambers of Trenton. Leon Abbett, New Jersey governor in 1883-1886 and again in 1889-1892, proved just such a man. Born in Philadelphia in 1836, Abbett came from a long line of Quakers. His father was a journeyman hatter in the city, and consequently young Leon received no more than a public school education. Abbett hardly found his humble origins a handicap. He entered the offices of a local lawyer and soon after established his own practice in Hoboken, New Jersey. Moving on to Jersey City Abbett became City Counsel and a Hudson County assemblyman in the 1860s. By the 1870s he was a New Jersey State Senator, and in 1883 Democratic nominee for Governor.<sup>2</sup>

Attacking corporation corruption of the state government,

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<sup>1</sup>National Labor Standard November 23 1899, Correspondence between Hobart's daughter and McDonnell July 7 1902 in "Correspondence", J.P. McDonnell Papers and D. Magie Life of Garret Augustus Hobart: Twenty Fourth Vice-President of the United States (New York, 1910) passim.

<sup>2</sup>Legislature of N.J. 1890 pp.187-189.

Abbett built up a considerable following in the state based upon the support of labor, immigrants, and both urban and rural smallholders. The New Jersey Federation's support for him in 1883 was almost a matter of course. Giving it added bite was the fact that Abbett's opponent was Judge Jonathan Dixon, the presiding judge at McDonnell's trial in 1880. McDonnell declared loud and clear for Abbett.<sup>1</sup>

In office Abbett did not disappoint his supporters. A major body of labor and social legislation was passed, much of it emanating from the New Jersey Federation.<sup>2</sup> Moreover Abbett's appointments helped ensure its enforcement. McDonnell himself was appointed a state Deputy Factory Inspector in 1884, and eight years later was made chairman of the State Board of Mediation and Arbitration, a position he held until 1894.<sup>3</sup> Others of McDonnell's local associates received appointments also, if less prestigious. Donohue was an enumerator for the state Bureau of Labor and Statistics in 1885. Emil Kaminski, former Master Workman of the Knights' Silkworkers' Assembly, received the same appointment in 1890. Similarly, local assemblyman, Jim Keys was made a Deputy Factory Inspector during Abbett's second administration.<sup>4</sup> Trivial as the appointments may seem, they gave labor activists unprecedented access to important government agencies and men of influence.

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Labor Standard November 24 1883, R.A. Hogarty "Leon Abbett of New Jersey: Precursor of the Modern Governor" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton, 1965) pp.30-33.

<sup>2</sup>Abbett to McDonnell March 7 1886, November 11 1892 in "Correspondence" J.P. McDonnell Papers, Hogarty ibid. pp.120-122, "Justice Leon Abbett" in Report of the Fifteenth Annual Congress 1893 n.p.

<sup>3</sup>"General Business Papers" J.P. McDonnell Papers.

<sup>4</sup>Legislature of N.J. 1887 p.205, American Silk Journal July 1890, Paterson Daily Press July 5 1892.



By far the most important was Abbett's appointment of Lawrence T. Fell as State Inspector of Factories during his first term of office; a position Fell maintained until 1895. Fell worked conscientiously to enforce the new code of factory and social legislation in the state, actively cooperating with McDonnell (his deputy for a time) and the Federation. In return he received the blessing and support of the state's labor movement. Repeated efforts to remove Fell and abolish his office were successfully resisted by Abbett with the aid of the state federation and its supporters.<sup>1</sup>

For all their success and apparent influence, the demise of McDonnell and the New Jersey Federation came rapidly with the 1890s. Abbett was removed from office in 1893 and his successor sacked McDonnell and emasculated the State Board of Arbitration. The following year, Fell was also toppled.<sup>2</sup> More labor legislation was out of the question. Indeed, the New Jersey Federation spent the next few years fighting to preserve its gains. In summing up the 1895 New Jersey legislative session, McDonnell noted that "...every measure in the interest of the exploiters was promptly passed, every measure in the interest of the proletarians was promptly killed".<sup>3</sup> Two years later McDonnell's dismay had not lifted. All aspects

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<sup>1</sup>Fell to McDonnell April 11 1889 in "Correspondence", J.P. McDonnell Papers, Report of the Sixth Annual Congress 1884 p.4.

<sup>2</sup>See attacks on the board in "Scrapbook 1892-1893", J.P. McDonnell Papers.

<sup>3</sup>Report of the Seventeenth Annual Congress 1895 n.p.



of the federation's legislative programme "...were slaughtered with glee and without a pang of remorse by men whom the wage earners elected as representatives".<sup>1</sup> The dimensions of this reaction to organized labor and reform in New Jersey remain unexplored. Republicanism triumphed in New Jersey during the 1890s depression and with it big business dominated the state legislature for a decade or more.<sup>2</sup> The sudden eclipse of the Federation had far-reaching consequences both for McDonnell and organized workingmen in New Jersey.

With the erosion of McDonnell's influence in state politics, his primary position within the New Jersey Federation declined. Failing health contributed to his demise. More important was the reaction to his reliance on, and association with the state government and its officials. For ultimately the state government had snubbed him and was launching a concerted campaign to undo his work. If McDonnell could not curry favour at Trenton then he was plainly of no use to the Federation.

Within the Federation hostility to McDonnell and his policies revealed itself in 1895. The recent death of ex-Governor Abbett prompted McDonnell to appeal for funds from New Jersey unions to erect a statue in honor of his benefactor. The appeal met with vehement opposition. The Hudson County representatives of the Federation reacted "with contempt" to McDonnell's suggestion. It was a symbolic, if ungenerous,

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<sup>1</sup>Report of the Nineteenth Annual Congress 1897 n.p.

<sup>2</sup>See S.T. McSeveney's The Politics of Depression: Political Behaviour in the Northeast 1893-1896 (New York, 1972), on the triumph of the Republicans in New Jersey. Unfortunately McSeveney does little to clarify the eclipse of organized labor in the state.

denial of McDonnell's pre-eminence in the Federation and rejection of his policy of the past two decades.<sup>1</sup> The Federation increasingly came under the dominance of craft unionists, with their narrow and all but exclusive sectional concerns.<sup>2</sup> Zeal for labor and reform legislation waned. In his old age, McDonnell was left a bitter and lonely figure.

Yet McDonnell's eclipse cannot be accounted for or appreciated solely in relation to struggles within the New Jersey Federation and the State legislature. Basic to it was his failure to lay the foundations of a strong local base of support. McDonnell himself attributed the decline in his own and the Federation's fortunes, to the state's wage-earners. In 1895 he declared that:

"...in order to accomplish the aims of progressive trade unionism it is necessary that trades unions be built upon the solid and lasting principles of mutual aid, high dues, less hours, higher wages and political independence". 3

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<sup>1</sup>F.L. Merkel to J.P. McDonnell January 5 1895, "Correspondence", J.P. McDonnell papers.

<sup>2</sup>See the opposition of craft unionists to McDonnell in 1899 over the seating of the Paterson Federal Labor Union 7003 at the annual convention, and again to his introduction of an "anti-imperialistic" resolution at the same convention. McDonnell similarly complained of lack of support in his fight against the Republican introduction of "biennial sessions" in the State legislature. Report of the Twenty First Annual Congress 1899 pp.27, 57, G. Bradford to J.P. McDonnell February 20 1897, "Correspondence", J.P. McDonnell Papers.

<sup>3</sup>Report of the Seventeenth Annual Congress 1895 n.p.



Following from this, the failure to "reform and ameliorate industrial abuses" was:

"...the just punishment of the wage workers themselves. It is their apparent indifference to the fact that what has been accomplished has been the outcome of many years of hard struggle.

We should not forget that if we won't aid ourselves no one else will, and that we shall get just as much as we fight for, and no more". <sup>1</sup>

Nowhere was his analysis more applicable than in his own locale, Paterson. And ultimately the "indifference" which so chafed on McDonnell reacted most forcefully against him.

Just as McDonnell lost support at the state level, so was his local position eroded. McDonnell's concern to "reform and ameliorate industrial abuses", backed by a strong and disciplined labor movement, was simply irrelevant to the character and pre-occupations of the city's silkworkers. Few Paterson millhands appear to have shared McDonnell's convictions. Further, most discovered methods of bargaining more appropriate to their immediate concerns.

Spontaneous , ad hoc organization was the silkworkers' characteristic response to industrial strife. It was usually formed in response to a discrete issue and scarcely ever sustained after the settlement of the problem. Moreover, at times of crisis, local millhands relied on a variety of other, extra-union activities and relations to bolster their cause. During strikes disorder, or its threat, was as important as the organized withdrawal of labor. Community support for workers

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<sup>1</sup>Report of the Nineteenth Annual Congress 1897 n.p.  
(McDonnell's italics)



was another crucial determinant in these struggles. Silk manufacturers' opposition to disorderly strikers was often undermined by an indulgent city administration and police force. Extra-union activity almost appeared to obviate the need for unions. As a result trade organization amongst Paterson silk-workers was weak. Sporadic union activity could not teach them the benefits of sustained organization nor convince them of the need for a long term strategy for industrial improvement.

This critical weakness had important implications for McDonnell. At the regional level it provided McDonnell neither with a strong local base within the state federation nor evidence of widespread support, even in his own locality, for his campaign for industrial reform. Locally, its effect was to severely restrict McDonnell's influence.

During the long and bitter strikes which bedevilled the local silk industry McDonnell could be relied on to back the city's textile hands. He offered editorial support in his journal, strove to provide leadership and coordination through the Passaic County Trades Assembly, and he was willing to act as an intermediary between strikers and millowners or even city authorities. But it was a limited role, and often with little effect on the outcome of disputes. Moreover as McDonnell increasingly emphasized organization and reform of the industrial system through labor legislation, his views were plainly at variance with those of the city's immigrant textile hands. By the 1890s McDonnell was becoming alienated from the concerns of the mass of Paterson wage-earners.

In 1894 McDonnell's position was brought sharply into focus. A strike by the city's ribbon weavers seriously disrupted silk manufacture. Industrial action in other branches of Paterson's textile industry followed. Production all but ceased. As head of the State Board of Arbitration, McDonnell stepped in, hoping to reach an amicable settlement. Despite two months without wages, the ribbon weavers flatly refused his overtures. He was left bitter and disillusioned by the experience. Attacking a "minority" who opposed settlement, McDonnell called for a "good, sound, common sense trade organization" amongst the city's ribbon weavers.<sup>1</sup> It was an empty call serving only to mark McDonnell's alienation from the city's silkworkers.

The city's silkworkers had failed to mature in the way McDonnell hoped and expected. Their proclivity to erupt spontaneously at threats to accustomed work practices or living standards disturbed him. Their failure to transform such collective outbursts into sustained organization disenchanted him. Uncontrolled and uncontrollable, they provided Trenton's legislators with ample excuse to undo McDonnell's hard-won gains. McDonnell's position was made explicit in a review of Paterson's silk industry published by the New Jersey Federation of Labor in 1897:

"When the silk operatives organize in bona fide trade unions for mutual help, when they pay weekly dues of 25 or 50 cents, when they make provision

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Labor Standard April 14 1894.



for out of work, sick and death benefits, and unite intelligently, not in moments of heat and passion, or for the sole purpose of striking, when they select their most brainy and competent men to act as officers and to make a thorough study of the silk market from A to Z, then they will have won public respect, and then can they meet their employers and discuss and annually settle all questions of dispute".

Only by such rationalization of industrial relations could silkworkers hope to make advances, the reviewer contended.

"Many of the worst strikes in Paterson have resulted from misunderstanding and might have been prevented by the exercise of good judgement and forbearance on the part of manufacturers and employees, and if the latter were organized in bona fide trade unions for benefit and protective purposes. It is clear to many of the manufacturers and workers that there is less to fear from organized labor than from labor acting as a mob, without reason or experienced leadership." <sup>1</sup>

"Labor acting as a mob" had no use for McDonnell. A labor activist replying to McDonnell's appeal for a local A.F. of L. organizer questioned the virtue of trying to organize those who only heaped scorn and abuse upon one's efforts.<sup>2</sup> A letter from William Prall, the lawyer who had defended McDonnell at the celebrated Paterson trial of 1880, expressed similar sentiments. Written at the turn of the century, it suggested the distance McDonnell was removed from the rank and file in the silk industry, and a certain contemptuousness mixed with fear that he perhaps shared with his correspondent. Casting aspersion upon those silkworkers who had attracted notoriety in a series of dramatic and disorderly strikes, Prall wrote:

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<sup>1</sup>Report of the Nineteenth Annual Congress 1897 n.p. - although authorship of the review is unknown it was almost certainly McDonnell, or one of his close Paterson associates, for it re-iterated his views expressed in the Paterson Labor Standard.

<sup>2</sup>Josiah West to J.P.M. June 14 1897 in "Correspondence" J.P.M. Papers.



"It is not indeed the really hard-working men and women who have brought such opprobrium upon the old town. Rather, the wretched riff-raff, who, like scum, are seen, but who are really of no weight and consequence". <sup>1</sup>

It marked a sad conclusion to McDonnell's distinguished career and his untiring efforts to improve conditions for New Jersey's wage-earners. And more importantly it signalled the sharply divergent responses to industrialism found in industrial cities like Paterson.

During the three decades after 1872, scarcely a year passed without a major strike disrupting Paterson's silk industry. Often these strikes were general, and the city's mills ceased production. In 1877 a general walkout by the city's ribbon weavers lasted three months. Nine years later a spate of strikes in both weaving and dyeing plants seriously disrupted output. The following year, 1887, the city's entire force of dyeworkers struck. In 1894 over fifty mills in the city were halted by a mass walkout of weavers. Seven years later silk-workers again struck in large numbers. 1902 brought a general strike by the city's dyeworkers. It reads like a catalogue of almost incessant warfare between millowner and worker. Yet the list could be ever further extended. Strikes abounded even during apparent lulls. In 1872, and again in 1880, ribbon

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<sup>1</sup>W. Prall to JPM undated letter in "Correspondence" JPM Papers, see also letter of G. McNeill to Mrs. McDonnell April 6 1906 ibid.

weavers came out for over three months in individual mills. In 1884 weavers in eight factories struck for over twelve weeks.<sup>1</sup> Nor can strikes in individual plants be simply dismissed as reflecting the special grievances of isolated groups of millhands. More often than not the effects of them reverberated through the entire city.

For sheer volume and frequency of strikes Paterson was a desperately ailing industrial community. One student of unionism in the city's mills has calculated that during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, one hundred and thirty seven strikes took place in the New Jersey silk industry.<sup>2</sup> The vast bulk of them would have been in Paterson, for it dominated the state's silk production. In these one hundred and thirty seven strikes, two hundred and thirty five individual mills struck and a further one hundred and seventy five establishments were closed as a result of the industrial action. Thus if most strikes took place within individual mills their effect often involved other plants. Of the one hundred and thirty seven only fifty nine strikes were ordered by any form of labor organization. The bulk of strikes were spontaneous in nature, relying on shop committees, or at times nothing more than shop loyalties, to prompt a downing of tools. Where organization did precede, and recommend industrial action, it was usually of

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<sup>1</sup>Wood "History of Labor" Appendix B pp.575-576.

<sup>2</sup>ibid p.160, N.J.B.S. Tenth Annual Report 1887 pp.246-249 and passim.

recent standing and often unable to exert much control over the walkout or subsequent return. In 1886 The Knights of Labor, who had been organizing in the city, tried in vain to prevent a walkout by dyeworkers. Nevertheless the strike succeeded and as a result the Knights were able to establish with local millowners a board of arbitration to avert further disputes.<sup>1</sup> Yet within eight months the dyeworkers were out again, despite opposition from both the District and General Assemblies of the Knights. Attempts by the Knights to arbitrate failed, ignored by both strikers and millowners.<sup>2</sup> Both manufacturers and workers assumed, and predicated their responses upon spontaneous walkouts.

Despite lack of planning and organization the strike record of Paterson's silk hands was not entirely one of failure. In the two hundred and thirty five mills in which strikes took place between 1881 and 1900 over one hundred were successful or partly so. One hundred and thirty three failed outright. The majority of stoppages were ostensibly the result of wage cuts or to demand wage increases, although more often than not other issues were closely involved; apprenticeship rules, shorter hours, or, most often, new work assignments and the introduction of new machinery.<sup>3</sup> Depression in the industry almost always resulted in wage reductions. The strikes of the 1870s, the late 1880s and 1890s were in response to wage cuts.

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian March 31, April 12, 23 1886, February 9 1887.

<sup>2</sup>N.J.B.S. Tenth Annual Report 1887 pp.274-276.

<sup>3</sup>Wood "History of Labor" pp.160, 575-576.



When the industrial production picked up during economic peaks silkworms usually took the initiative in striking for increases, as in the mid 1880s. Frequently disputes involved new work assignments and the introduction of new machinery. These cannot be easily separated from wage concerns , for in an industry in which piece-rates were dominant, methods of production was intimately linked to wage levels. Certainly the disruption of familiar work routines and new systems of production and payment featured prominently in the strikes of the 1870s, explicitly in the disruptions of 1883-1884, and again in 1894 and 1901. The prevalence of the question of technological change may help to explain the persistence of spontaneous or loosely coordinated strikes in the city. For technological change was usually introduced piecemeal and unevenly, in one or two leading mills. Thus it was often of direct concern to only a limited number of millhands.

The cyclical pattern of the strikes should also be noted. Demand for silk was seasonal. Production rose during February and March each year in anticipation of the year's new Spring fashions and strikes almost invariably coincided with this.<sup>1</sup> Many factors contributed to the spate of springtime disputes. Labor was most scarce during this period. For manufacturers interruptions to production were always unwanted, but never more so than at the height of this, their busy season. Thus a short strike in springtime could often meet with success, especially if silk was "in fashion" and demand for it great. Cyclical production emphasized silkworms' propensity to strike spontaneously. By a quick and total withdrawal of labor, millhands hoped to wring concessions from their employers

before the "season" was over.

The absence of stable trade unions, a tradition of frequent and spontaneous walkouts, an industry bedevilled by wage cuts and seasonal production - all doubtlessly contributed to the instability of industrial relations in the city. They fail, however, to illuminate the dominant and persistent characteristic of industrial action by Paterson's millworkers; strike disorders and violence. Disorder or outright violence accompanied every major industrial dispute in Paterson's silk industry in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Its prominence can only be accounted for in terms of the main participants in these industrial battles; recent immigrant workers, the city's millowners, often recent arrivals also, and the chief custodians of public order, Paterson's City Government and Police Department.

Just as millowners found disciplining workers within their factories a wearying and often unsuccessful exercise, so too in the public domain they discovered a workforce which refused to acknowledge their right to dictate terms of employment. Moreover, during industrial disputes, millowners confronted an added burden which detracted seriously from their efforts to subdue unruly and uncooperative millhands; their inability to count on support from the guardians of public order in the city.

Time after time during industrial upheavals, factory owners called upon Paterson's police force to quell riotous strikers and to protect mill property. After each incident a ritual was repeated. Millowners would issue a condemnation of



"communistic" workers and censure city authorities for the inadequate number of policemen in the city, and for the city's failure to request the assistance of state troopers to suppress the disorders.<sup>1</sup> "In the case of a strike", a prominent silk manufacturer grumbled in 1897, "there is no move to protect loyal operatives from taunt, infamy and intimidation. Absolute violence must be committed before the city authorities will interfere. Hands are followed through the streets, jeered at and maligned without hope of protection in any form...."<sup>2</sup> By 1900 industrial disorder had become a familiar, if unpleasant, fact of life for the city's silk magnates. At the turn of the century an official of the Silk Association of America affirmed: "The same spirit of unrest exists in Paterson today as it ever did...." Disorder, he explained, was endemic in the city, "...whereas when you get in other cities you do strike a good vein of sound American common sense, honest and law-abiding character".<sup>3</sup> Even allowing for a complete absence of "sound American common sense", disorder over such a time period suggests that something more fundamental was at the root of the mill-owners' problems. It suggests that disorder cannot be seen as exceptional or atypical of the bargaining process in Paterson, but rather as a central, almost hallowed tradition, drawing

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<sup>1</sup>New York Herald March 8 1880, New York Times February 13 1884, August 3 1877, August 29 1880.

<sup>2</sup>Textile America October 16 1897.

<sup>3</sup>Ind. Comm. 1900 XIV p.703.



sustenance from a variety of sources, but not least, from the failure of silk manufacturers to utilize the power of city authorities effectively in their own interests.

Why should this be so? Paterson was no frontier boomtown, lacking an established and responsible government. Nor were its workers the lawless "desperados" we associate with the American West.<sup>1</sup> Paterson was an old municipality with, in normal circumstances, an effective and stable government where transitions between administrations were typically uneventful.

The explanation of disorder offered by Sam Bass Warner in his work on Philadelphia is scarcely more useful.<sup>2</sup> There, immigrants rioted to demand political recognition. In Paterson, on the contrary, the government was traditionally responsive to workingmen's pressure. It is this that explains strike violence in the city. Disorder was neatly tailored to Paterson's industrial and social structure. Aimed against millowners, it depended on city hall's favour or, at least, neutrality in industrial disputes, and took its pattern from that significant fact.

The character and form of strike violence in Paterson was analogous to the "collective bargaining by riot" with which Eric Hobsbawm describes the actions of machine-breakers in industrializing Britain.<sup>3</sup> Unlike British machine-breaking,

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<sup>1</sup>See the contributions of J.B. Frantz and R.M. Brown in H.D. Graham and T.R. Gurr ed. Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives (New York, 1969).

<sup>2</sup>S.B. Warner The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth (Philadelphia 1968) pp.125-157, M. Feldberg "The Crowd in Philadelphia History" Labor History vol.15 No.3 Summer 1974 pp.323-336.

<sup>3</sup>E. Hobsbawm "The Machine Breakers" in Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour (London, 1964) pp.5-22. See also

however, disorder in Paterson was not the precursor of trades unionism and a more stable base for collective bargaining. It is the weakness of organization, not its absence or legal curtailments to unionism, which marked silkworkers' actions. For whilst the work of McDonnell and the New Jersey Federation of Trade Unions had guaranteed Paterson's millhands a framework of protection, silkworkers lacked organization at the point of production where their immediate concerns were at stake.

Bereft of effective unions and lacking a tradition and established machinery of collective bargaining, Paterson's workers found disorder a natural and effective alternative. That it rarely gave rise to widespread fears of a breakdown of law and order, despite the scaremongering of manufacturers, is testimony to a general recognition of its limited nature. Disorder was not an irrational expedient, born of futility and despair and threatening to rend all asunder. Directing their behaviour against scabs, city authorities, the workplace or even millowners' private residences, millhands could expect, and often obtained, the sympathy of much of the city.<sup>1</sup> In 1877, after a Board of Trade meeting at which the "inefficiency of the city authorities" was roundly denounced by millowners, city mayor Buckely refused to submit to demands for protection of scabs and prosecution of disorderly strikers. He stormed

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G. Rudé on the "pre-industrial crowd" and early labor riots. The Crowd in History (New York, 1964) and Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century (London, 1969).

<sup>1</sup>H.G. Gutman "Class, Status and Community Power".



out of the gathering.<sup>1</sup> Almost twenty years later, both the mayor, Christian Braun, and the city police chief, Fred Graul, rejected similar demands from the Board of Trade during a general walkout in the silk industry. Indeed when "an immense crowd gathered in the streets and cheered", Mayor Braun, a local brewer, accompanied his family in reviewing the procession, "removed his hat and bowed his acknowledgments", promising the assembled free beer once the dispute was settled.<sup>2</sup>

Clearly industrial disorder was an effective weapon. But to seek reasons for its persistence solely in terms of the responsiveness of city authorities towards it would be misleading. It was rooted as much in the character of the city's labor force and their work situation as it was in the nature of local government. As Hobsbawm made clear, solidarity, the basis of an effective working-class movement, is only slowly learned and cannot, overnight, become the unquestioned practice of workingmen. Nowhere is this truer than in nineteenth century America where the process of immigration alone impeded the growth of a working class with common traditions and experiences. Paterson shared with most other American cities in this cycle of immigration, and with it a constant turnover of its workforce. The sheer expansion of the city, from 33,000 inhabitants in 1870 to over 78,000 twenty years later,

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times August 3 1877.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times April 21 1894, Paterson Daily Press April 14 1894.



and by 1910 to over 125,000, is staggering in itself.<sup>1</sup> Englishmen, Scots, Irish, Germans, French and Dutch all came in large numbers. They were followed from the mid-1890s by Italians and in the 1900s by East European Jews. Although often from artisan textile centres, these immigrants were for the most part unfamiliar with factory discipline, and more often than not unfamiliar with each other. Each group faced the problem of adjustment to their new life in the city's mills. However that adjustment was uneven in its timing and impact, because immigration into Paterson was staggered, spread over half a century. The absence of a common background with shared values and traditions, coupled with the forcing of older immigrant groups into new occupations or out of the city as "green" hands moved in, all made for a workforce fragmented rather than unified. Although most immigrants underwent a similar process, it was an experience that was never collective. As such it was unlikely to form the basis of a deep-rooted and permanent solidarity.

Stephan Thermstrom and others have portrayed nineteenth century America as a highly mobile society, residentially if not occupationally, and although reliable mobility statistics are not available for the city, there seems little reason to doubt that Paterson differed substantially from Newburyport or Boston.<sup>2</sup> A mere twenty miles from the world's major port of

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<sup>1</sup>Ninth Census of the U.S. 1870 I p.379, Eleventh Census of the U.S. 1890 XV p.240, Thirteenth Census of the U.S. 1910 III p.119.

<sup>2</sup>S. Thermstrom *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Harvard, 1964) and S. Thermstrom and R. Sennett *Nineteenth Century Cities: Essays in the New Urban History* (Yale, 1969).

immigration, it is difficult to imagine that Paterson's work-force did not experience high rates of turnover, especially if we recall that from the 1890s unskilled or semi-skilled work predominated in the silk industry. A high proportion of the labor force was made up of children, young women at work in the years between school and marriage, or young men in their teens and early twenties awaiting the prospect of a move into skilled or more lucrative employment. They were scarcely good union material, as a local organizer was well aware: "...by the time you get a few of them together and get them educated along the lines of the benefits of trade associations there is another big bunch in, and you have to educate them, and those you have educated drift off". It was a problem as insoluble as it was inevitable. "I have seen fifty organizations in my time in this city of all kinds and descriptions", he continued, but there is still a "lack of organization":

"...and why is there a lack of organization is on account of the great influx of immigration to this country...there are so many different classes and they seem to be antagonistic to organization unless you can form an organization that will give them instant action. They want something to strike right away and seem to think strikes is the only thing to benefit them". <sup>1</sup>

In this context orderly strikes were impossible. Even McDonnell, despite his scepticism of the rash actions of unorganized millhands, had to admit that disorder could perform

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III pp.2422, 2429-2430.



an important educational function in achieving a clearer sense of workers' solidarity. "During strikes", he observed, "it has not been the intent of labor to intimidate working operatives, only to persuade them that union means strength and strength ultimate good. Persuasion is all that strong labor men will allow and they expect to lose and not to gain by the other thing. Where there has been intimidation it must be placed at the doors of unsanctioned, over-enthusiastic individualism".<sup>1</sup> Despite the apologetics, McDonnell clearly saw the necessity for "intimidation" as the only means of "union". "Strong labor men", he knew, were scarcely in abundance amongst Paterson's immigrant silkworkers, and their pleas for peaceful "persuasion" were cries in a wilderness. The street demonstration, hooting, jeering, symbolic gesture, intimidation and violence, or the threat of it, were a natural alternative to orderly strikes, for they achieved a solidarity, albeit temporary, that was effective. As McDonnell remarked in the Paterson Labor Standard:

"...all the police in the world could not reach the annoyances that the (scab) weavers have at home and on the streets that are not particular offences - taunts and flings, insults and remarks. A weaver would rather have his head punched than be called a "Nobstick" and this is the class of injury that they hate the worst and that keeps them out more than direct assault".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Textile America October 30 1897.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Labor Standard January 3 1880. The taunt, "Nobstick" was an import from England, doubtlessly brought over by immigrant weavers. Similar patterns of communal intimidation were traditional amongst silk weavers in mid-nineteenth century Coventry. See P. Searby "Weavers and Freeman" pp.516-525 and E. Partridge A Dictionary of Historical Slang.



If the weakness of trades unionism encouraged the use of disorder, action of this kind was found to be a particularly potent weapon in an industry bedevilled by sudden market fluctuation. Slump followed boom in the textile trades during the nineteenth century, but nowhere was this more acute than in the production of silk. Bad harvests of silk worms or even the whims of fashion could suddenly disrupt production. As a luxury item silk was dispensable when money was short. Economic depression usually hit the industry hard. Moreover, silk production was seasonal, in response to changes in the spring and winter fashions, hardly requiring the constant levels of production of more basic commodities.<sup>1</sup> This influence upon the pattern and frequency of strikes in the city is evident. Together these features of the silk industry made for situations in which intermittent rather than constant pressure was necessary if silkworkers were to resist the "speed-up" or short-time. Spontaneous and disorderly strikes were to be expected. No carefully amassed strike funds were available for an orderly withdrawal of labor. Nor were any necessary. An outburst of strike violence was threatening. It demanded the immediate attention of millowners who might have preferred to ignore the requests of less vociferous opponents.

Paterson's textile hands normally took to the streets en masse during strikes. Processions of chanting and singing

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<sup>1</sup>For an insight into the problems of the industry see Chapter Four, silk manufacturers' testimony before the Ind.Comm. 1900 XIV pp.670-707. M.W. Garber passim "The Silk Industry of Paterson N.J."

operatives, often headed by a brass band and sometimes carrying placards or the "Stars and Stripes", would bring the normal traffic of the city to a halt. Their route would usually encompass City Hall, often the mayor's private residence, the city's major commercial thoroughfares and mill districts. It would usually end with a rally, accompanied by musical entertainment, speeches by strike leaders and sometimes a picnic.<sup>1</sup>

Public display was fundamental to striking millhands. It served notice to manufacturers and city authorities of collective sentiment. Also, and probably more important, it was essential to strike solidarity. Collective demonstration could galvanize strikers of different nationalities, often only recently introduced to the new discipline of mill life and dubious of their status as a factory proletariat. By its strident visibility it challenged not only the city's manufacturers to flaunt its demands, but also renegades to ignore the strike call and cross picket lines.

If processions were on the whole orderly, and at times took on an almost carnival atmosphere, they were frequently accompanied by bitter attacks on scabs, mill property, and sometimes on millowners. Processions of disciplined and orderly strikers could, and often did, revert to forms of behaviour which suggest that violence was more appropriate to them and their needs. The most obvious object of attack was strike-breakers. Picket lines were thrown around mills during strikes

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<sup>1</sup>The Labor Standard August 25 1878, New York Times January 19 1884, Paterson Daily Press April 14 1894



and an incessant din of "blasts on tin horns, jeers and cat-calls" begun, to induce strikebreakers from their looms.<sup>1</sup>

"Serenading" was often supplemented by pelting the windows and doors of factories with bricks. Derisive howls and scuffles greeted the arrival of any police who tried to intervene. In 1894 Police Captain John Bimson was forced to draw his revolver to quell a furious crowd of pickets. Eight years later gunfire was exchanged between police and enraged strikers.<sup>2</sup>

Strikebreakers were ostracized from the communities they lived in. A focus for derision, they could expect to be howled at on the streets or simply ignored in local saloons and stores. Millowner William Strange was certainly discouraged by the effect public scorn had on "loyal" operatives. During industrial troubles, he observed, "...if a man tried to work he was called a "scab" and that clung to him all his life. His wife could not venture on the streets without being pointed out, and the children were afraid for their lives".<sup>3</sup> As Strange intimated physical coercion was the prop on which the social ostracism of strikebreakers rested. During the investigation of disturbances amongst dyeworkers in 1894 an Italian witness for the prosecution was reluctant to testify about assaults on a mill foreman and bookkeeper. Asked if he had been threatened by fellow Italian dyeworkers, the witness clammed up tight.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NJBS Twenty Fourth Annual Report 1901 pp.437-438.

<sup>2</sup> Paterson Daily Press March 1, 9, 10 and 12 1894, American Silk Journal May, June 1902, Paterson Daily Guardian April 23 1902.

<sup>3</sup> Paterson Daily Press March 14 1894.

<sup>4</sup> Paterson Daily Guardian July 5 1894.



Direct physical assault of blacklegs was also common. In 1877 female workers threw salt in the eyes of a male weaver who refused to join their walkout. When a female weaver was arrested as a result "...a large number of strikers accompanied her to the magistrates office, hooting and cursing the policemen as they went along". They waited to cheer her upon the announcement of bail.<sup>1</sup> Usually scabs were punched, stoned and beaten. Crowds would follow strikebreakers from the mills and picket their homes. Sometimes the picketing would degenerate into wholesale attacks on scabs' houses. In defiance of police posted outside the door, strikers stoned windows and hurled insults. Indeed, scabs might have to be taken into custody for their own safety.<sup>2</sup>

Millowners and their property were similarly singled out for attack. Manufacturers made a sustained drive to impart to workers a sense of respect for mill property. But despite the restraints of factory disciplinary codes ca'canny was a potent weapon in their workers' armoury. The 1877 court cases in which strikers were tried for the destruction of unfinished silk point to the possibilities of industrial sabotage during disputes. Dyeworkers commonly tipped up vats of unfinished work, destroying their contents during walkouts.<sup>3</sup> The stoning of mills usually accompanied picketing, but cannot be interpreted exclusively as intimidation of strikebreakers, for attacks

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times June 21 1877.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Daily Press March 2, 9 and 13 1894.

<sup>3</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian February 11 1887, Paterson Daily Press March 1 1894, American Silk Journal April and May 1902.

on mill property per se were fairly common. The worst outbreak of destruction to millowners' property was in 1902, when crowds of striking dyeworkers marched through Paterson systematically stoning mills, smashing doors, windows and where possible machinery. In one instance they even went so far as to improvise a giant catapult to hurl rocks at a mill building.<sup>1</sup>

Threats to blow up mills, if not common, were sometimes resorted to by strikers. After a six month strike at the Little Company in Paterson silkworkers threatened to dynamite the mill. The owner, at least, took the warning seriously, "got a little shaky over it", and conceded to the strikers.<sup>2</sup>

Foremen, supervisors and even millowners, themselves, were not exempt from the fury of disorderly millhands. Attacks on mill managers and foremen generally took place during walkouts or the picketing of factories. They were doubtlessly coloured by grievances accumulated during the normal running of the mill, not least because to overseers fell the burden of enforcing factory disciplinary codes. Both manufacturers and mill supervisors were at pains to display their contempt for crowds of enraged strikers, which in turn fuelled the passions of millhands. During the 1894 troubles millowner William Strange

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<sup>1</sup>American Silk Journal ibid., A.W. Wishart The Case of William MacQueen: Reasons Why He Should Be Liberated (Trenton, 1905) pp.5-9, New York Times June 19 1902.

<sup>2</sup>Ind.Comm.1900 VII p.980.



flaunted the crowd of pickets around his factory by casually pacing the sidewalk outside, protected by police, and probably looking for familiar faces. At the Pioneer Mill, Superintendent Thomas Ryle strove to create a similar impression of unconcern by appearing at the mill entrance puffing on a huge cigar.<sup>1</sup> Their bravado belied frequent attacks and threats to manufacturers and their supervisory staff during industrial disputes. In both 1894 and 1902 attacks on mill foremen were savage.<sup>2</sup> During the ribbon strike of 1901 a supervisor at the Frank and Dugan mill had his carriage wrecked by "serenading strikers".<sup>3</sup>

Threats to the city's millowners were more ominous. During the industrial upheaval of 1877 William Strange found himself surrounded by a jeering and hostile crowd of strikers whilst driving through the city's streets. Three years later during a subsequent strike a parade of disenchanted millhands publicly burned an effigy of Strange.<sup>4</sup> In 1894 opposition to Strange took a more concrete form. A bomb was planted under his home. Fortunately for him it was discovered before exploding.<sup>5</sup> Yet if Strange provides the most spectacular example of millhands' threats he was not singled out. During the dyers' strike of 1887 rumours were rife of threats to burn down dyehouses.<sup>6</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Press March 1 1894.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Daily Press July 5 1894, New York Times April 23 1902.

<sup>3</sup>American Silk Journal October 1901.

<sup>4</sup>New York Times June 21 1877, Paterson Labor Standard January 3 1880.

<sup>5</sup>Ind.Comm. XIV pp.703, 680. Paterson Daily Guardian May 24 1894.

<sup>6</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian March 2 1887.



1890, after Jacob Weidmann, Paterson's leading dyer, had replaced a "restless and turbulent mob" with strikebreakers, a local German newspaper issued the following warning:

The Weidmann Helpers are All To Work backturned, while the better people, like Dyers and Finishers, themselves after Work outlook. If Weidmann yet one pair such Victories secures will he also gone be". 1

Twelve years later Weidmann received letters threatening him with death. He was reported to be...in constant dread of the foreigners whom he has had in his employ".<sup>2</sup> Weidmann apparently took the threats seriously for he manned his mill with armed guards, and "Winchester rifles poked out of the windows menacingly".<sup>3</sup>

During the rioting of 1902 the owner of the Ashley and Bailey mill was captured by strikers, thrown into a dye vat and badly scalded. At the American Dyeing and Finishing Company one of its proprietors, George Arnold was severely beaten.<sup>4</sup> The home of millowner Joseph Banford was bombarded with stones. At the Geering dyehouse the owner, trying to placate an unruly crowd, was fired at.<sup>5</sup>

Millowners were not alone in appreciating the drama of the silkworkers' action. Silk dominated the city's economic

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in American Silk Journal November 1890.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian April 23 1902.

<sup>3</sup>New York Times June 19 1902.

<sup>4</sup>American Silk Journal May 1902.

<sup>5</sup>New York Times June 19 1902, Paterson Daily Guardian April 23 1902.

life by 1900. From employing a mere three thousand workers in 1870, Paterson's silk industry expanded at a prodigious rate. By the turn of the century almost nineteen thousand were employed in mills and dyehouses in the city, over sixty per cent of Paterson's industrial workforce.<sup>1</sup> There was hardly a household in the city that did not shelter at least one silkworker. Moreover the city's business and commercial life was dependent upon millhands' earnings. Saloon-owners, shopkeepers, and much of Paterson's petit-bourgeoisie relied on workers' patronage, had perhaps extended credit to them, and were intimately tied to them in a score of familiar ways. Time and again during industrial disputes it was this petit-bourgeoisie, more often than not storeowners and saloonkeepers, who provided support and, perhaps even more important, respectability to silkworkers' actions. In 1894 it was a German saloonkeeper who stood trial for planting a bomb under the house of William Strange.<sup>2</sup> When an Italian shopkeeper, that same year, assaulted a youth who was supplying strikebreakers with food, the local press cynically commented:

"It is supposed that (he) made the assault...to show his sympathy with the strikers, to 'make himself solid' with them so that they would further patronize his place.

These are the people who furnish the backbone of the strike; perhaps not all voluntarily, but out of necessity. They have many persons on their books who have been good customers when times are brisk...If He (the shopkeeper) would refuse them now he would in all probability lose what they owe him when they return to work, and at the same time lose their trade." 3

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<sup>1</sup>Ninth Census of the U.S. 1870 III p.624, Twelfth Census of the U.S. 1900 VIII pp.570-571.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian June 28, July 20 1894.

<sup>3</sup>Paterson Daily Press April 6 1894..

Despite the obvious community of interest between the shopocracy and millhands, there is a grain of truth in such cynicism. As early as 1881 the Paterson Labor Standard had urged shopkeepers not "...to sympathize with the operatives for their own sake, we ask them to do so for their own interests".<sup>1</sup> Recalcitrant store-owners were publicly denounced, their goods boycotted, and their stores "serenaded".<sup>2</sup> The naming of scabs was directed as much to neighbourhood store and saloon keepers as to strikers. Scabs were to be shunned not only by their fellow workers but throughout the community at large. Neighbourhood pressure on blacklegs was often as important to strikers as the extension of credit by local merchants. In 1878 strike-breakers brought in from Fall River, Massachusetts, were successfully turned back from Paterson by a strike committee. Their employer had been unable to find a boarding house in the city to offer them accommodation.<sup>3</sup>

No economic self-interest impelled the support of men such as the Reverend Gallaway, a local Presbyterian minister, who remained the outspoken defender of workingmen's interests in Paterson for more than a quarter of a century, nor that of the retired judge from Newark who advised jailed strikers in 1901.<sup>4</sup> Indicative of the widespread support that silkworkers

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Labor Standard October 15 1881

<sup>2</sup>The Labor Standard July 14 1878, Paterson Daily Press April 6 1894.

<sup>3</sup>The Labor Standard August 4 1878.

<sup>4</sup>Paterson Daily Press March 29 1894, National Labor Standard July 18 1901, April 18 1903.



could command is the list of arbitrators submitted by them during the industrial disputes of 1887. It included a local "contractor", a clerk, a wholesale grocer, a cap trader, a grocer, an assistant engineer of the Fire Department, a furniture dealer, a dry goods merchant, a School Commissioner, a printer and a local clergyman.<sup>1</sup> If the dimensions of this support remains largely unexplored, such people suggest that a good deal of public opinion did not comply with manufacturers' attempts to break workers' resistance, and further that the form that resistance took received at least tacit support.

The attitude of those who held the reins of power in local government is less ambivalent. Dependent upon workingmen's votes, the mayor and board of aldermen found it politically impossible, should they have so desired, to back millowners' demands for prompt and outright suppression of strike disorders. The support or control of city government was crucial to millowners if they were to effectively combat industrial violence.

Compared to a country like England, responsibility for the maintenance of law and order was considerably more decentralized in the United States. At the city level the mayor was vested with executive authority over Paterson's police force. If the mayor required he could request assistance from the County Sheriff, who was responsible for upholding the law with

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian February 9 1887.

Passaic County, exclusive of cities within the county. But with meagre funds and a small force of constables, he was unable to offer much assistance even if requested. The mayor could further appeal to the Governor of New Jersey for state troopers if he felt them necessary. But neither the County Sheriff nor the state government could intervene in the city unless invited by the mayor. The mayor's power was limited however; but significantly at the local rather than a higher executive level. True to the American system of checks and balances, the mayor was responsible to the city's board of aldermen. Although aldermen lacked the mayor's authority to influence the functioning of the police force, they possessed, through the city budget, control over the size of the Police Department. Moreover complaints against the police had to be forwarded by the mayor to the board of aldermen to be heard and decided upon. Thus the structure and personnel of local government played a critical role in the industrial relations of the city.

A succession of mayors and aldermen proved uncooperative when pressed by manufacturers for more effective policing of the city and suppression of strike disorders. They persistently thwarted millowners' pleas for strict surveillance of strikers and intervention during disputes. At most, police were detached to protect mill property and strikebreakers. Moreover, city fathers refused to bow to demands for state intervention. Although state and federal troops had been used against strikers in the upheavals of the railroads in 1877, at Homestead, in the mining towns of the West, and most notably at Pullman in

1894, state intervention was not typical and stemmed, at least partly, from doubts about the reliability of local police authorities. At Pullman it was directly initiated by the Federal Government over the opposition of local politicians. Moreover in all these disputes strikers confronted industrial and transportation magnates of immense wealth and influence.<sup>1</sup> In Paterson the situation was hardly comparable. Local mill-owners lacked the weight of steel and railroad barons, and strikes in a localised, luxury industry were unlikely to attract the national attention of a railroad dispute. Strikes were endemic in Paterson. Intervention of this kind was scarcely practical. When New Jersey state troops did enter the city during the dyeworkers riot of 1902 it was to mark a significant new departure in the industrial history of the city.

Analysis of the occupational and ethnic background of a generation of city fathers has revealed some basis for their independent stance from the millowner elite of the city. Most were of Yankee or British stock, often "self-made" men, or still employed in skilled or self-employed occupations, who owed their incomes and status to non-industrial business or property. They have been pictured as a generation predating the arrival of factory owners, whose outlook was rooted in the

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<sup>1</sup>A. Lindsay The Pullman Strike (Chicago, 1942) partic. 147-175, J. Brecher Strike (San Francisco, 1972) pp.1-100, R. Wiebe The Search For Order 1877-1920 (New York, 1967) pp.91-2. R. Ginger Eugene V. Debs: A Biography (Rutgers, 1949) pp.136-167. J.M. Cooper "The Army as Strikebreaker: The Railroad Strikes of 1877 and 1894" Labor History 18 No.2, Spring 1977, pp.179-196, R. Rheinders "Militia and Public Order in Nineteenth Century America" Journal of American Studies II No.1, April 1977 pp.81-101. R.V. Bruce 1877: Year of Violence (New York, 1959).



smaller, pre-factory communities of mid-nineteenth century America; and that indeed many of them may have resented the disruption that the new factory lords brought in their wake.<sup>1</sup> This background surely influenced the relationship between city administrators and millowners. Ties between city fathers and millhands were not so obviously attributable to common origins. Here mutual interests were more functional, a product of the structure of local government. Both mayor and aldermen relied on silkworkers' votes and, as with McDonnell's supporters, the city political machines proved responsive to workingmen's pressure. When, as in 1894, they did not, workers served a harsh reminder of their political sway, electing Matt Maguire, a Socialist Labor Party candidate, to the board of aldermen, in opposition to the incumbent, machine prospect.<sup>2</sup>

The political influence of workers on city government was most clearly demonstrated during industrial disputes. In 1878 Mayor Buckley, who the year before had successfully resisted manufacturers' pressure to stamp out strike disorders, ignored the request of a Paterson millowner to arrest McDonnell, who was organizing a strike demonstration. Instead he and other local government officials contributed to the strikers'

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<sup>1</sup>R.A. Noble "The Relation of the Middle Classes and Local Government of Paterson, New Jersey, to the Labor Movement in the Paterson Silk Industry 1872-1913" (B.A. dissertation, Princeton, n.d.) pp.71-109. H.G. Gutman "Class, Status and Community Power".

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian April 7, 11, 12 and 14 1894, The People April 22, May 13 1894, Paterson People July 14 1894, July 21 1894.

relief fund.<sup>1</sup> Such support often was not gained without local politicians being reminded of the dangers of ignoring workingmen's interests. Two months after Buckley refused to listen to the millowner's demand McDonnell was convicted of libel. His prosecutor was a leading figure in the Passaic County Democratic Party. Mass demonstrations paraded the city in protest. When the local Democrats held a ratification meeting in October 1878 they faced a hostile audience. Disenchanted millhands refused to let Prosecutor Woodruff speak. Cries of "tar and feather him", "Put the scab out" and "Cowhide him" led to a suspension of the proceedings. Neither Mayor Buckley nor McDonnell's defence lawyer could placate the crowd. Police were hastily summoned to disperse the assembled. Two days later the meeting was reconvened. Woodruff again rose to speak. On this occasion an estimated five hundred rose and walked from the hall in silence. Police attempts to prevent the exodus failed; instead millhands marched through the streets cheering.<sup>2</sup>

Such pressure hardly went unheeded. In 1880 Mayor Graham again rejected millowners' demands for an increase in the size of the police force. The Paterson Labor Standard dryly noted that the arguments of manufacturers carried "little weight"

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<sup>1</sup>The Labor Standard July 28, August 18 1878.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times October 29 1878, The Labor Standard November 2 and 9 1878.

with the Board of Aldermen.<sup>1</sup> Both mayor and aldermen received sufficient warning when the same journal, a year earlier, suggested:

"If any of our public officials want to be re-elected let them show their usefulness by advancing measures for the good of the work people. To all public employees, whether they be Aldermen, policemen or so forth who do their duty like decent men the Labor Standard will give full credit". 2

The power of workingmen to influence successive city administrations apparently endured. In 1894 Mayor Braun, like his predecessors, took scant regard of manufacturers' calling for state troops to suppress disorders. Instead he issued a statement to strikers asking for peaceful observance of the law. Condemned by the Board of Trade for a "milk and water proclamation which was more likely to urge these people on", Braun made clear his support for silkworkers by publicly addressing a strikers' parade.<sup>3</sup>

Millowners' provisions for an effective policing of the city during industrial upheavals were undermined not only by city officials, but also by community pressure at a grass roots level. In the late 1870s millowners sponsored the Paterson Light Guard, a private militia which they hoped would supplement local police in controlling unruly strikers. Discredited by

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Labor Standard January 24, March 13 1880.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Labor Standard November 11 1878.

<sup>3</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian March 12, 13 and 14, April 14 1894.



its failure to disperse Orange and Catholic rioters in the city in 1880, and actively opposed by Paterson millhands the guard served manufacturers little useful purpose.<sup>1</sup> Millhands formed their own units to compete with the Light Guard. The Labor Guard and Dunphy Guard were pledged to defend the city's workers should millowners launch an attack.<sup>2</sup>

Consistent workingmen's hostility towards the military in any form convinced both millowners and city officials of the hazards of inviting militiamen into Paterson. McDonnell launched a virulent campaign against the Light Guard and the city government's proposal to fund an armoury in the city.<sup>3</sup> Even an innocuous event, such as the proposed military parade during the 1892 Centennial celebrations in Paterson, taxed working class tempers. Local labor figures protested against giving state militiamen "too much prominence" because "...a procession of working people ought to be the most notable feature of the centennial".<sup>4</sup> The expected arrival of President Cleveland for the street processions prompted a local reverend to exclaim:

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<sup>1</sup>J.E. Growell The Excursion of the Paterson Light Guard (Paterson, 1883), New York Times May 3 and 4 1880, Shriner, Paterson pp.88-97.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Labor Standard January 3 1880, January 24 1880.

<sup>3</sup>ibid. October 22, December 24 1881, July 15 1882.

<sup>4</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian May 6 1892.

"...that the military from other places did not represent Paterson, and that the President undoubtedly would rather see the brawn and muscle from the manufactories of this city than military from other places; besides that, military displays were not looked upon with favour by the working classes, who always considered the military as a menace to them".<sup>1</sup>

Although a detachment of state troops did eventually arrive, a local newspaper noted that "...it was with considerable reluctance that they obeyed the order to 'fall in' yesterday morning to come to this city".<sup>2</sup>

Local police suffered similar opposition from Paterson's silkworkers during industrial disputes. Many policemen probably had strong roots in the city's working class neighbourhoods. James Moore, a local labor activist, was the brother-in-law of Patrolman Draper; similarly Alderman Matt Maguire, champion of strikers during the 1894 dispute, had a brother on the force.<sup>3</sup> The extent to which kinship and community ties influenced police conduct cannot be accurately assessed; but, it certainly was not entirely absent. Policeman Andrew McBride, who joined the force in 1886, remembered how his ethnic ties in the city's Irish community often had to be invoked to preserve public order and overcome popular suspicion of the police. "I had to appeal to our people many a time after becoming a policeman", he recalled.<sup>4</sup> In 1877 Officer John Bimson discovered feeling against the police could run high.

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<sup>1</sup>Official Programme of the Centennial Celebration of the Founding of the City of Paterson 1892 (Paterson, 1892) (in W. Nelson Collection, Box 19, Paterson Public Library) pp.67-8.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Evening News July 6 1892. In 1903 a resolution at the convention of the short-lived United Silk Workers of America prohibited members from joining the National Guard "or any other armed force used for the purpose of breaking strikes and shooting strikers". National Labor Standard March 14 1903.

<sup>3</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian July 30 1894, The People June 30 1895.

<sup>4</sup>C.I.R. III p.2569.



Chasing a minor felon Bimson attracted a crowd determined to prevent the arrest. Pelted with mud and stones, Bimson was forced to threaten all with arrest before taking the culprit. The policeman was both surprised and dismayed, for he "knew most of them". His surprise turned to anger when his father was beaten up by the crowd as a result of the arrest.<sup>1</sup>

During industrial disputes police were probably glad to cooperate with city government in not making their presence felt too forcefully. An observer noted the low profile that the police strove to maintain:

"The city authorities have sent policemen to protect the industrious working men, but the officers make no arrests, although at times the streets have been blockaded with the crowd gathered to intimidate the workers. In some cases the Police have taken the working men home by back ways to evade the crowd. This manifestation of fear has encouraged the strikers to be bolder in their display of violence".<sup>2</sup>

Community sentiment was at sufficient pitch during strikes to deter a more resolute stand by the city's police authorities.

A manufacturers' journal complained:

"...Paterson has become so accustomed to having her peaceful or orderly work-people hounded through the streets, driven from their work, and abused and assaulted even in their homes, that citizens look on with comparative indifference, while the police make only the most feeble attempts to curb the riotous elements".<sup>3</sup>

Even during periods of industrial calm Paterson's policemen hardly exuded confidence and authority. In 1880 after the

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times August 26 1877.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times August 29 1880.

<sup>3</sup>American Silk Journal June 1902.



numbers of patrolmen in the city had been increased, the Paterson Labor Standard was able to gleefully remark: "The new policemen blush when they are stared at".<sup>1</sup>

The size of the police force was in fact increased from twenty four members in 1880 to just over a hundred by 1900. In the same period the number of Paterson inhabitants doubled, from fifty one thousand to one hundred and five thousand. Thus although the proportion of officers to residents rose, such a marked increase in the absolute size of the city's population can scarcely have made its policing any easier. Most notably, supplements to the force in the late nineteenth century do not appear to have resulted from millowners' requests.<sup>2</sup> At times additions to the force seemed dramatic. In 1895, following the disorders of the previous year, over twenty additional patrolmen were taken on. Yet within two years a truculent millowner was calling for the "...right of workmen to labor unmolestedly", a right which he felt had been "...violated during the past years by our officials, in whatever capacity, and by citizens at large who have encouraged disorder..."<sup>3</sup>

Only in the courts, could Paterson's silk barons expect assistance from public officials, and even there a cooperative judiciary was not guaranteed. Judges were state appointees:

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Labor Standard May 29 1880.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times March 30, April 20 1880, City Officers, Paterson N.J. Annual Report of the City Officers of Paterson 1901-1902 (Paterson 1902) pp.135-137 (hereafter Annual Report of the City Officers).

<sup>3</sup>Textile America October 23 1897.

their sympathy with the millowners' predicament would depend very much upon the political character of the state executive and the men he had assigned. In the late 1870s manufacturers had found the state judiciary pliable enough to twice convict McDonnell, and to enforce millowner Strange's work rules forbidding weavers to join a walkout before finishing their work in hand. But it was often only from the higher echelons of the state judiciary that millowners could expect favourable decisions. At the local level, that of City Recorder, the bench was much more susceptible to community persuasion. All judges were partisan political appointments, and at the local level were often the product of the city's political machines.<sup>1</sup> The degree to which local politicians were influenced by the pressure of workingmen was reflected in the Recorder's Court. Thus in 1882 we find Recorder Greaves warmly greeted by Paterson's workingmen for refusing to side with millowners during a wages dispute.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, a governor sympathetic to workingmen, such as Leon Abbett, was unlikely to appoint even senior judges favourable to employers' interests. For a decade or more, during the 1880s, the judiciary was effectively removed from employers'

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<sup>1</sup>New Jersey's judicial system was unusual amongst American states in that no posts were elective. For an outline of its complex structure, see P.F. Gill and R.S. Brennan "Report on the Inferior Courts and Police of Paterson, N.J." unpub. ms. in Records of the Department of Labor, Reports of the Commission on Industrial Relations 1912-1915, R.G. 174, National Archives, Washington.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Labor Standard May 27 1882.

influence; but from the mid-1890s men such as Abbett were a dying breed in the state executive. Business interests increasingly dominated the state executive and brought in their wake a series of governors with scant regard for workers' concerns. Their appointments were to have significant implications for the industrial relations of Passaic County.

During the 1901 disorders Paterson millowners for the first time obtained an order from the Court of Chancery, enjoining crowds from gathering outside mills, "serenading" scabs or even using "disrespectful treatment".<sup>1</sup> Strikers ignored the injunction and were jailed on charges of contempt. The reactions of police and city authorities to this judicial directive which seriously compromised their traditional stance during industrial disputes is of great interest, for it reveals much about popular attitudes towards manufacturers' encroachment on striking silkworkers' most potent weapon, control of the city streets.

Strikers themselves found it easy to defy the injunction by simply "enlisting some adjoining property-owner or resident in their cause" in order to "occupy the front stoop of his place and from this vantage-point...defy all efforts to remove them from the block". "This", a local observer remarked, "seems to be a 'horse' on Mr. Injunction".<sup>2</sup> Despite this success,

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<sup>1</sup>N.J.B.S. Twenty Fourth Annual Report 1901 pp.437-438.

<sup>2</sup>American Silk Journal May 1902.



the resourcefulness of silkworkers was not limited to mere evasion of the law. Paterson's millhands possessed a sense of proprietorship in the public domain - by custom the streets were theirs, and their political "pull" guaranteed that custom was to be respected. Mass gatherings of strikers condemned the courts. Local labor leaders attacked police rigour in implementing the injunction with a curt warning: "We have not yet forgotten that police officials are employees and not masters, and we won't forget it next fall".<sup>1</sup> A demand was issued to the Board of Aldermen calling for an investigation of police actions in enforcing the court's directive. The outcome was the passing of a new city ordinance, before a City Hall crammed full of strikers, permitting picketing in the city.<sup>2</sup>

Although the 1901 troubles seem to indicate the police officers were zealous in their desire to curb unruly strikers, the department as a whole was far from uniform in its pursuit of such aims. Chief Graul faced an unenviable dilemma. Sworn to uphold the law, he lacked a sizeable enough force to wage all-out war on the strikers. As head of the department since the 1860s, he doubtlessly recognized how deeply strikers' contempt for the injunction ran. Counselling reason, Graul strove to maintain a position of impartiality, not dissimilar from his superior in City Hall, the mayor. That conflict existed between Graul and his second-in-command, John Bimson,

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<sup>1</sup>National Labor Standard May 30, June 13 1901.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. August 22 1901.

seems fairly certain. While Bimson was condemned by silkworkers for "abuse of his authority", Graul was applauded in resisting pressure to ban public meetings of millhands.<sup>1</sup> Bimson had proved a similar bane to millhands in previous strikes, but not so his chief. Seven years earlier during a wave of strike violence, a delegation of silk dyers had called on Graul and were encouraged by him to elect their own stewards to assist police at street gatherings.<sup>2</sup> Again in 1902, when the wholesale wrecking of dyehouses had resulted in Mayor Hinchcliffe bowing to millowners' demands for state militia to assist the police department, it was Chief Graul who bore the brunt of blame in not suppressing the disorders. Hinchcliffe, no doubt anxious to deflect responsibility, denounced the chief before suspending him from duty.<sup>3</sup>

The insistence of successive mayors and police authorities on maintaining a position of neutrality in effect denied millowners the degree of control they needed to combat disorderly strikers effectively. One manufacturer bitterly complained: "...the authorities in Paterson seem to have done their best to drive manufacturers from the city...in the large strikes that have occurred in the past few years they have taken sides with the men against the manufacturers".<sup>4</sup> A trade journal voiced similar discontent with the community sentiment that seemed to

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<sup>1</sup>National Labor Standard June 13, August 8 1901.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Daily Press April 3 1894.

<sup>3</sup>New York Times June 19 and 20 1902.

<sup>4</sup>Textile America October 30 1898.

conspire to undermine the manufacturers' position:

"...the police are tied up by politics, the tradesmen fear a boycott by the large working class, the newspapers vie with each other in trimming sail to curry favor with the same element, the saloons open wide their doors to the beer-drinking mob by which they live, and they and the brewers go on their bail-bond when any of the wild-eyed Anarchists, Socialists and others of the heterogeneous masses, who are foremost in all the strikes, go a step too far and get themselves before the courts".<sup>1</sup>

Such instability was taxing not only millowners' resources but also their will and faith in the future of their mills.

Confronted with their failure to control city government, Paterson's silk barons faced one of two alternatives; either they could move their plant to new locations where labor was more pliable and city governments more amenable to their requests, or they could seek to influence changes in the form of Paterson's municipal government, changes that might make it more responsive to their needs. Clearly millowners bore such calculations in mind. As one of them put it: "As for the politicians who imposed obstacles in the path of the city's progress, there is but one thing to say. They should be shorn completely of the power which they have wielded so perniciously".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>American Silk Journal June 1902.

<sup>2</sup>Textile America December 18 1897.



## Chapter Four

### INDUSTRIAL CRISIS

Their failure to control local government, and in turn the workforce of the mills, became a pressing problem for Paterson's manufacturers during the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century. The problem of an uncooperative and, at times, belligerent labor force had long pre-occupied them. Now it assumed new proportions. The rapid expansion of the silk industry and the easy profits of the 1870s and 1880s were no longer possible. Economic depression in the closing decade of the nineteenth century revealed instabilities within the industry which had previously been masked by the race for increased output and profit. Even when trade prospects appeared rosy, Paterson's silk manufacturers expressed a decidedly guarded optimism. "It must not be expected that this city will ever again see the prosperous times in that industry that it enjoyed many years past", the American Silk Journal declared in 1902, even though "...it is about to be greatly better than it has been..."<sup>1</sup>

Despite their troubles Paterson's millowners were far from resigned to accepting passively a diminished field of opportunity. They had built the silk industry more or less from scratch and greatly contributed to the expansion of Paterson; a fact, they felt, often ungenerously overlooked by

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<sup>1</sup>American Silk Journal January 1902.

both the city's workers and its middle class. They were determined to continue in business, either in Paterson or, if need be, elsewhere. Their prescriptions for the industry's ailments were not uniform, however, and they showed that millowners were struggling against each other almost as much as against their workers and an unsympathetic local government. Only one factor united them, the need to cheapen labor costs. All solutions inevitably confronted this problem and, consequently, the opposition of millhands. The bitterly fought strikes of the period were one result. Less immediately apparent were longer term changes in the social and economic character of the city.

By the 1880s American silk manufacturers had established a flourishing and successful industry. They had broken the back of European competition. Yet in their early success can be traced the origins of later difficulties. The American industry had been founded upon the principle that only by more efficient organization and technological innovation could native producers compete with the cheaper labor costs of European competitors. Their success in ousting European silks from the American market appeared to confirm this. Factory production and the powerloom were pictured as heralds of a glorious future. The notion of reducing labor costs was a continuing and dominant motif in the outlook of American millowners. Where machinery could replace the worker it was sought. Where it could not, mechanization that would reduce labor to an unskilled status

and cheaper cost, was acceptable. Long after the spectre of cheap European imports had ceased to cloud their horizons American millowners were still adamant in their quest for reduced labor costs.

The American silk industry "...is conducted within close lines of prudence, with marked economies in manufacture and care in management", an observer remarked in 1887. In the wake of the successful struggle against European competition his claim was pertinent. Intense competition within the industry now replaced international rivalry. "More than all else", the writer continued, "in every branch of the American silk industry which has obtained control of the market and distanced European rivalry, a home competition has arisen which is more relentless and severe than the old conflict with the foreigner".<sup>1</sup> It was this native competition which placed a continuing onus on silk manufacturers to reduce costs, and the greatest scope for reduction was with labor.

Competition was a direct outgrowth of the silk industry's expansion. As the capacity of native producers to compete with foreign competitors became increasingly evident so newcomers tried their hand at silk manufacturing. The prospect of large profits must have appeared within easy reach for the number of individual silk establishments increased rapidly. By the 1880s Paterson was dotted with both large and small producers.

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<sup>1</sup>Wyckoff American Silk Manufacture p.47.



During the early decades of silk manufacturing, entry into the industry was relatively simple. So great was the need for experience that anyone with a thorough knowledge of the trade and a little capital stood a chance of fulfilling the "rags to riches" dream.<sup>1</sup> More likely, anyone with a background in silk production would find financial backing as had John Ryle, the pioneer of the Paterson silk industry. Immigrant manufacturers from Europe were another important source of new entrants and long after the arrival of major European producers newcomers continued to open up small plants.

A major reason for the ease and frequency with which new producers sprang up was the financial arrangement of the industry. Although major silk weaving businesses were financially independent - either as limited liability companies, or more commonly, through their owners ploughing back profits - many of the smaller producers were heavily dependent upon external credit. Silk merchants, either as importers of raw silk or selling houses for finished products, were an important source of finance for manufacturing establishments. Builders of silk machinery sometimes performed a similar function. For both, credit extension was a means to a limited end; to sell goods or to procure finished silks. So reliant were many smaller manufacturers upon silk merchants that the slightest depression

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<sup>1</sup>Dry Goods Bulletin pp.39, 46, 48, 49.

in trade prospects and tightening of credit could send many to the wall. A trade journal, in praising New York's benevolent commission houses during the bleak winter of 1890, revealed the basis of the relationship between merchant and small manufacturer:

"It is pleasant to note the fact that during the pendency of what has certainly been a sort of crisis in domestic silk circles the commission merchants and dealers in raw material have dealt most tenderly with the lambs of the industry who, instead of having been shorn by their creditors, have had the cold wind of adversity tempered to them very kindly.... (we) heartily congratulate all concerned on the adoption by New York silk merchants of so lenient and liberal a policy, which...has saved many a struggling manufacturer from the odium of failure and the bankruptcy court". 1

Such an arrangement scarcely seems to have advanced much beyond that prevalent in the early European handicraft industry. Certainly it appeared primitive to the industry's larger manufacturers who complained bitterly of the credit facility that enabled new manufacturers to spring up almost at random. Pilloried as "guerilla manufacturers" whose "...proper vocation is driving mules, shoving a plane or, at the very utmost, running a loom", the newcomers were the bane of the larger producers.<sup>2</sup> Petty manufacturers were denounced for lowering the quality of American silks and thus ruining the hard-earned reputation of the industry's pioneers. More trenchant was the objection to their glutting the market with

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<sup>1</sup>American Silk Journal March 1890.

<sup>2</sup>American Silk Journal October 1890.

cheap goods.<sup>1</sup> "The American manufacturer gained his market in the face of bitter protest only because he was jealous of the reputation of his goods and was ever mindful of the quality that bore his trade-mark", a manufacturer announced to members of the Silk Association of America in 1899. "In the fierce struggle of present trade conditions", he continued, "the temptation is indeed strong to act upon not 'how good?' but 'how cheap?', let it not be forgotten that public confidence once lost is hard to regain". His answer to the problem of intense competition and declining quality of product was simple: "Let an effort be made to bring back conditions to a more normal basis so that the raw silk dealer, the manufacturer and the retailer each take upon himself his own risks and responsibilities and not call upon the other to do so".<sup>2</sup>

The plethora of small and marginal producers took little notice of such pleas. Over-production and a consequent decline in silk prices characterized the industry in the late 1880s and 1890s. A leading trade journal explained:

"This...is not done by experienced and business-like manufacturers, who may be counted upon to trim their sales to correspond with wind and tide, but by a certain class of men who should never have entered the business at all. This class is composed of ex-butchers, ex-grocers, and ex almost every other conceivable calling who, without any qualification or fitness, have been induced to tackle silk through

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<sup>1</sup>ibid. March, May 1890. Textile America November 30 1898.

<sup>2</sup>Silk Association of America, Twenty Seventh Annual Report 1899 (N.Y.n.d.) p.31.



a mistaken idea that there were 'millions in it' - for them; also of ex-employees in silk mills who, while they might know something about operating a loom...are utterly ignorant of the condition of the market and of the commercial side of the business generally."

These petty producers had not the resources to limit production until prices revived. Bound by tight credit arrangements they could only produce more, whatever the market.

"Many of these beginners have little or no capital, but start looms purchased on credit, and continue on advances made by the commission merchants on the produce as delivered, or in advance of delivery. Manufacturers thus circumstanced are compelled to go on; they have no choice in the matter".<sup>1</sup>

Added to the problem of over-production were periodic declines in the market for silk goods. A luxury industry, silk was hit hard during economic depressions. Although the emergent industry combatted the depression of the 1870s, during the late 1880s and again in the 1890s hard times brought many silk mills to a standstill.<sup>2</sup> Although a few lonely voices called for the development of an export trade to stimulate production their words fell on deaf ears.<sup>3</sup> So heavily protected were American silk products that competition for markets abroad was almost unthinkable. Yet singularly dependent upon consumption at home, the industry paid heavily during downturns in the American economy.

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<sup>1</sup>American Silk Journal October 1890.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian December 4, 9, 15 and 16 1893, NJBS Seventeenth Annual Report 1894 pp.24-31.

<sup>3</sup>Textile America November 30 1898.

Seasonal changes in fashion could have almost as devastating an effect on demand for silk products. "The whims of fashion can no more be controlled than they can be understood", silk manufacturers lamented during a dull season at the turn of the century.<sup>1</sup> A decade later the problem remained. Despite trade organizations urging the silk manufacturer to "study the condition of the selling market" and not rely on "his commission house or selling agents whose interests do not always correspond with his own", manufacturers developed little in the way of marketing that may have influenced trends in fashion.<sup>2</sup> Instead they lived in hope of a return to fashions that would require their product in abundance. "The trade has been hoping for a number of seasons past that the era of wide skirts and full sleeves would again give opportunity for the disposal of larger quantities of merchandise", a spokesman declared in 1911.<sup>3</sup> His hopes were fulfilled a few years later. The "...introduction of the tango and other South American dances has had somewhat of a stimulative effect upon the silk industry", the Silk Association of America commented, "by reason of the great number of dancing gowns required, not only by women of fashionable society, but also by women of moderate means, who dine out much more than

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<sup>1</sup>Silk Association of America Twenty Eighth Annual Report 1900 p.38.

<sup>2</sup>Silk Association of America Twenty Ninth Annual Report 1901 p.56, Ind.Comm. 1900 XIV pp.674-675.

<sup>3</sup>Silk Association of America Thirty Ninth Annual Report 1911 p.21.

formerly".<sup>1</sup> Not all manufacturers were as passive as this in awaiting solutions to their problems. As early as the 1880s some had begun to take positive steps to overcome the industry's difficulties.

A crisis in the silk industry was commonly admitted by American manufacturers. Its recognition prompted a variety of responses which can loosely be termed a "movement" to rationalize the industry. Two major tendencies were readily apparent, both re-enforcing each other. One was to achieve some measure of amalgamation, by which larger producers could take over small, marginal manufacturers, or, at least, guarantee limits to output whilst upholding the quality and price of American silks. Amalgamation, it was hoped, would end ruinous competition whilst preserving native competitiveness against foreign imports. In like fashion silk manufacturers pressed for cuts in production costs. By cost reductions producers could hope to resist falling prices whilst further diminishing the competitiveness of foreign silks. Cost reductions were only likely through integrating productive processes and achieving economies of scale, or by technological innovations in the techniques of manufacture. In turn, both were likely it was hoped to spur the movement towards amalgamation. Economies of scale would only be possible through combination. Moreover it was likely

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<sup>1</sup> Silk Association of America Forty Second Annual Report 1914 p.15.



that the investment required for innovations in production techniques could only be afforded by the larger silk concerns. The small unable to compete would be driven from the field.

Trusts and combinations were being formed throughout American industry in the late nineteenth century. It is hardly surprising that silk manufacturers were touched by the example of America's oil and steel barons. Testifying before the U.S. Industrial Commission in 1900, Charles F. Homer, treasurer of the Silk Association of America, praised the tendency towards amalgamation in the industry and the integration of production processes within individual companies. "Many of the manufacturers take a bale of silk today in the raw and turn it back upon the market a finished product in all its details", he proudly announced.<sup>1</sup> It was an excellent public relations performance, perhaps. Yet there was little substantive evidence to support Homer's claims. His remarks were based more upon wishful thinking than any boastful self-satisfaction shared by the industry's leading figures.

The desire for amalgamation and cost reductions were at best tendencies. Unity amongst silk manufacturers was never sufficient to give such ideas the force or direction of a concerted drive to effect a major rationalization of the industry. No single producer or group of producers emerged to dominate the

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<sup>1</sup>Ind.Comm. 1900 XIV p.700.

industry. Indeed the industry's expansion was featured by a commensurate increase in individual manufacturers. The Silk Association of America, the principal trade organization, expounded the virtues of amalgamation, but could achieve little materially to forge unity amongst manufacturers. Its membership, whilst including leading manufacturers, was also composed of raw silk merchants, commission and retail houses - the very source of credit for the industry's marginal producers.<sup>1</sup>

During the closing decade of the nineteenth century attempts were made to achieve measures of unity amongst manufacturers. They remained the individualized and sporadic efforts of small groups of men, however. In April 1892 the American Silk Journal reported a desire to "combine" in the silk throwing trade. The object was to "gain control with a view to elevate prices", a measure which would ensure "great economies at every turn" and result in "uniform prices" throughout the industry.<sup>2</sup> The outcome of this particular venture is unknown, but it probably accomplished little of lasting importance. Eleven years later a syndicate of leading Paterson manufacturers combined to purchase an extensive throwing plant in Pennsylvania with a view to ending their reliance on commission merchants for thrown silk.<sup>3</sup> In the dyeing industry the desire for combination found expression with the Silk Dyers' Association of America, formed

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the membership rolls for the Twenty Ninth Annual Report of the Silk Association of America 1901 (N.Y. 1901) and the Forty Second Annual Report 1914 (N.Y. 1915).

<sup>2</sup> American Silk Journal April 1892.

<sup>3</sup> NJBS Twenty Sixth Annual Report 1903 p.596.

in 1898. The association's aim, to standardize prices, met with little success. Within a year of its foundation, the organization had disbanded. By the time a dyers' association was revived in 1913 it had forsaken attempts at price regulation. Recognition of past failures at regulation, doubtlessly tempered by anxiety to ameliorate popular opposition to trusts, resulted in a clause forbidding price-fixing being written into the association's bye-laws.<sup>1</sup>

Although by 1900 the Silk Association of America was still urging: "...all unite to save the ship, instead of each concentrating his efforts in a wild panic to save his own life", in the very same year testimony of manufacturers at the U.S. Industrial Commission's hearing revealed the hollowness of such exhortations. Although they recognized the fact that ruinous competition plagued the industry they were equally frank in admitting a silk trust was near inconceivable. Manufacturers could not even agree upon a rudimentary arrangement for fixing prices.<sup>2</sup> Jacob Weidmann, Paterson's leading silk dyer lamented: "...one manufacturer is an Englishman, the next a German, the next a Swiss and the next French. They are all jealous competitors and so you can never harmonize when the thing comes up".<sup>3</sup> The fear of competition and price-cutting was so imprinted

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<sup>1</sup>Heusser History of the Silk Dyeing Industry pp.548-551.

<sup>2</sup>Ind.Comm. 1900 XIV p.692.

<sup>3</sup>ibid. p.706.



on the minds of silk manufacturers that even a recognition of the advantages of large-scale production in lowering costs was ignored. Extensive capital investment was shunned; there was even a reluctance to build up stocks unless an immediate outlet was available. Instead small scale production predominated.<sup>1</sup> In 1909, of almost three hundred manufacturers in Paterson, twenty nine employed between one and five people, one hundred and two employed between six and twenty hands, and seventy four employed between twenty one and fifty people.<sup>2</sup>

Reducing production costs accompanied the desire for combination but assumed a special emphasis after the failure of the latter. In Paterson this emphasis was of particular significance. Silk City was the home and by far the most important manufacturing centre of the industry. Because of this concentration the drive for cost reductions was felt more forcefully here than anywhere else. More importantly the special problems of Paterson's millowners confronted by an ill-disciplined workforce and an uncooperative local government, gave their drive for economies a thrust and urgency particular to the city.

Reducing costs, particularly labor costs, had always been prominent in millowners' thinking. The American silk industry had been founded upon U.S. producers' ability, through technical efficiency, to compete with the lower labor costs of European

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<sup>1</sup>ibid. p.731.

<sup>2</sup>Thirteenth Census of U.S. 1910 IX p.753.

manufacturers. Factory organization and the power loom had formed the basis of this efficiency. Adaption to the latest innovations in production processes became the hallmark of the American industry. Yet almost from the outset American mill-owners, and particularly those in Paterson, faced considerable stumbling blocks to their drive for technological advance, not least from an intransigent workforce and an uncooperative local administration. As early as 1873 British consuls in the United States, reporting on the development of textile manufacture abroad, were singling out Paterson millhands for their militancy.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the 1870s and 1880s Paterson millowners found that the introduction of new production techniques brought hostile reactions from their workers, who more often than not gained widespread support throughout the city. Both the widespread introduction of automatic looms in the 1870s, and again the two-loom system in the early 1880s, provoked bitter industrial struggles. From an early date Paterson millowners would doubtlessly have liked to end their dependence upon their intransigent workers; but they found it impossible. Paterson had become the haven for Europe's emigrant silkworkers, and during the early years of the industry silk technology was not so advanced as to make redundant the expertise of skilled hands. In this sense millowners' emphasis on continuous technological

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<sup>1</sup>"Reports of Her Majesty's Secretaries of Embassy and Legation respecting Factories for the Spinning and Weaving of Textile Fabrics Abroad" Parl. Papers 1873 LXVIII Cmd.826 p.784.

progress was a double-edged weapon. Not only was it essential to the continued competitiveness of the industry, but hopefully would also end the days when the "...business of the mill... was at the mercy of its operatives".<sup>1</sup>

The 1880s was a crucial decade in the development of the industry, and the unfolding of manufacturers' intentions. For the first time technical innovations greatly increased the employment of unskilled and semi-skilled labor in key branches of the industry. Improvements in the throwing of silk was one crucial area. The speed of spindles was vastly increased, and many tasks involved in the throwing of silk almost fully mechanized. By the 1890s the spinning, doubling and twisting of silk had become virtually one process. Improvements in the weaving of silk paralleled innovations in the preparation of silk for the loom. The mechanization of broad looms was further refined, and after 1889 the automatic ribbon loom was introduced.<sup>2</sup> Both the preparation, and to a lesser extent, the weaving of silk could now be carried out by a labor force requiring not so much skill and experience as the discipline essential to machine tending.

The task of introducing new work processes met with virulent opposition from Paterson's workers. In itself this was hardly remarkable; indeed, quite natural.

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<sup>1</sup>Wyckoff The Silk Goods of America p.29.

<sup>2</sup>Twelfth Census of the U.S. 1900 IX pp.222-225, Eleventh Census of the U.S. 1890 p.219-222, vol.13, Clark History of Manufactures pp. 453, 212-213.



The problem was, however, further complicated by the particular relationship of mill owners to local government. Relations between the two were ultimately very important in shaping the form of technological change. Not only had the city administration traditionally opposed manufacturers by supporting the city's workers in industrial disputes, but more generally, and in various forms, it displayed a marked reluctance to further the interests of millowners or succumb to their demands. By the mid-1880s Paterson ceased to look the attractive site for locating or extending business that it had appeared twenty, or even ten years earlier. The response of many millowners was, wherever possible, to simply remove their plants elsewhere, to more amenable localities. During this decade a slow but steady exodus began, as local manufacturers opened up "annexes" in Pennsylvania or the South.

Although the importance of local government in influencing the growth of annexes can hardly be divorced from the primary drive for reductions in labor costs, the former was frequently used by Paterson manufacturers as a reason for their flight from the city. It would seem that the weight of manufacturers' invective should have been directed, if at all, against the state rather than the local administration. By the 1880s the influence of the New Jersey Federation of Trade Unions had resulted in the passage of a considerable body of labor legislation, much of it irksome to silk manufacturers. A factory inspectorate was established, children and women's labor regulated, employees' health and safety provisions enacted

amongst other things. Yet surprisingly state regulation of industrial conditions figured little in Paterson manufacturers' reasons for leaving New Jersey. Admittedly the passage of the Fifty Five Hour Law in 1892, limiting the working week, was viewed as a severe blow to the state's manufacturing interests. The American Silk Journal commented upon its enactment: "The fact is that many elements - including the Labor and Legislative and the municipal - seem to conspire to drive the silk and some other important industries from the State..."<sup>1</sup> The absence of similar legislation in other states was increasingly used by silk manufacturers as a justification for annexes, and more importantly for wage cuts and the introduction of labor-saving machinery, locally. They were engaged in unequal competition, they claimed.<sup>2</sup> Yet although state legislation, and particularly the limitation of the working week, added to the momentum of the exodus, it cannot be seen as a prime cause in the migration of local millowners. The annex movement originated before much of the state's industrial enactments had been introduced. Moreover the scant regard paid to it by silk manufacturers in justifying their movement suggests other concerns were foremost in their reasoning.

Paterson's local administration was more frequently an object of attack by silk interests. Local antipathy to manufacturing interests was contrasted with the attitudes of municipalities elsewhere. In the coalmining communities of Pennsylvania municipal officials actively encouraged the intro-

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<sup>1</sup>American Silk Journal July 1892, see also August 1892.

<sup>2</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2417, 2430, 2469.



duction and growth of industry. Here manufacturers could expect interest-free loans, rent-free sites, immunity from taxation and a position of considerable status in the local community. In Paterson, on the other hand, local officials were keen to bleed manufacturers through heavy taxation. Rents were high, municipal facilities poor and real estate values inflated. Most important, millowners saw little prospect for change. Working class influence on the local administration far outweighed that of manufacturing interests, denying millowners the special consideration they felt they deserved.

During the early years of the movement of millowners to Pennsylvania, local boosters were keen to dismiss the growth of annexes as insignificant to the future prosperity of Paterson. Rumour, in the New York press, of an "exodus" of manufacturers was dismissed as an "absurd and unfounded statement". Although much of the throwing branch of the industry was now being carried on in Pennsylvania, Paterson suffered little competition in the weaving of silk.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless in the course of the next year the opening of annexes continued, prompting, in turn, a series of meetings in the city to discuss the migration of manufacturers and the future of the city's dominant industry. The meetings revealed the depth of millowners' opposition to Paterson's municipal officers. Local millowners pointed to the attractions of Pennsylvania "... where the communities welcome them and facilitate in every way

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian November 11 1885.



their establishment". Some municipalities were willing to erect mill buildings for prospective manufacturers, others offered low interest mortgages, low rents and the "lowest taxes possible". To these advantages could be added cheap coal from the Pennsylvania mines and an abundance of cheap labor, more often than not the children and wives of miners. Now that the throwing branch of the industry required only unskilled supervision an annex in Pennsylvania was an alluring prospect for many Paterson manufacturers.

Aside from the positive attractions of new locations, Paterson millowners were adamant in picturing themselves as the victims of local neglect and hostility, forced to flee the city. A particular injustice, they felt, was municipal taxation. Taxes, a manufacturer explained in 1885, "...are regarded by silk men of this city as most burdensome as well as unequally imposed...parties are exempted who ought not to be and others on whose success the prosperity of the city largely depends are assessed at a rate that in many cases is both unjust and ruinous".<sup>1</sup> There was some substance to manufacturers' complaints, for not only were millowners taxed on real estate, but also on machinery within their plants, an issue they found particularly galling. Municipal revenues on machinery were non-existent in Pennsylvania and most other eastern states. Moreover within New Jersey large corporations, particularly railroad corporations and municipal franchise

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian November 11 1885.

companies, were exempted from this "personal taxation".<sup>1</sup>

Silk manufacturers' invective against the tax assessment is revealing, for again it was directed pre-eminently against the municipal authority. Although silk interests called for the state legislature to equalize the burden of taxation by revising the exemption of corporations, the weight of their opposition was directed against local officials. Millowners claimed that while property owners were frequently allowed to evade payment of the municipal assessment, they were expected to "manfully" bear the tax load.<sup>2</sup> "There is no equity shown, manufacturers are there only to be bled", a local silk manufacturer exploded, "...the city assessor seems to think manufacturers are only to be bled. Taxes are advanced yearly and when complaint is made to the proper authorities a hearing is virtually denied. We have tried again and again to have our assessment considered, but without avail".<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the odium of the city assessment on manufacturing plant, millowners pictured municipal officials as ravenous in their determination to wring every last penny from them. Assessments, manufacturers charged, "...are made with inexcusable carelessness, in the doorway of a mill often, without discretion, knowledge of the property or regard to

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<sup>1</sup>Textile America December 25 1897.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian December 16 1886.

<sup>3</sup>Textile America October 16 1897.

representations made, on the basis largely of the assessments of the previous year. Thus no account is taken of the depreciation through wear and tear, and a manufacturer is often compelled to pay taxes on machinery long after it has gone into the scrap heap".<sup>1</sup> Presumably similar considerations prompted the "scrapping match" between millowner Bamford and a city tax assessor in June 1890. The local press reported that:

"While assessing mill property this forenoon a Tax Commissioner was villified by one of the Bamford brothers to such an extent that he lost his temper, and the mill owner now wears his eye in mourning. The Commissioners say that they always have trouble at this establishment".<sup>2</sup>

All confrontations between silk interests and the municipal government did not degenerate into physical assault, but bitterness between the two continued throughout the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Silk manufacturers charged municipal officials with "unjust" taxation, and further claimed that incompetent handling of municipal funds was detracting from the city's attraction as an industrial location. In particular manufacturers called for improvements in the city's transportation system, for asphalt roads paid for by taxing "property owners with one-half or two-thirds of the cost". Millowner Catholina Lambert voiced a prevalent discontent:

"The streets of Paterson are poorer and dirtier than those of any other city of its size in the United States. They are generally constructed of 4 inch

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian November 11 1885.

<sup>2</sup>American Silk Journal July 1890.



macadam on a clay bottom and as a result the surface is ground by heavy traffic into a fine dust which the citizens have to live in and breathe. Because of this dust it is fast becoming impossible to make perfect light shades (of silk) in Paterson".

Local officials agreed that "...we might have better roads here", but were quick to remark that "...we should have to bond the city for them". And such a venture was far from guaranteed success for "...a great many property owners would use their influence to prevent such additional expense to them".

Such instances indicate the conflicts of interest that could exist between manufacturers and the population at large in industrial cities, such as Paterson. Many manufacturers viewed these problems as intimately connected with the politics of municipal administration. Local government, they contended, was not only prepared to tax manufacturers into oblivion, but municipal revenues were a source of graft for perpetuating the political machine rather than the basis for improving the city and encouraging industrial growth. "As to taxation", one silk manufacturer grumbled, "I can only say that if the proper kind of men were elected as Aldermen Paterson could be governed much more economically and the present tax rate would be materially reduced".<sup>1</sup>

Though attacks on local government resounded, the growth of the annex movement cannot be primarily attributed to this

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<sup>1</sup>All quotes from Textile America October 16 1897.

source of manufacturers' discontent. The magnet of cheaper land, loans and buildings, of lower taxes and a pliable municipal administration pales under scrutiny. For all figured as relatively minor elements in silk manufacturers' costs. Table 8 indicates that throughout the period 1890-1910 (the heyday of the growth of annexes) the vast bulk of manufacturers' capital was invested in buildings and machinery, or tied up in purchases of raw materials and stock in hand. Although fuel and rent were appreciably cheaper in Pennsylvania, both were relatively insignificant in relation to overall operating costs. Moreover taxation, the bane of Paterson mill-owners, did not contribute much to costs either.<sup>1</sup> Far and away the biggest single difference in costs between Paterson and Pennsylvania was wages. In 1890 wages paid to Pennsylvania millhands were appreciably lower than those in Paterson. Moreover this disparity did not alter appreciably prior to World War One. In 1910 when the workforce had grown to almost double that of Paterson the wage bill of Pennsylvania's millowners was scarcely more than thirty per cent higher than that of their New Jersey brethren. "The labor was cheaper than Paterson labor at the time", a silk manufacturer explained

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<sup>1</sup> Taxation is classified in the census under "Miscellaneous Expenses". Although these rose appreciably during the period this was due to a census reclassification, rather than any dramatic increase in revenue. In 1910, for example, taxation amounted to less than \$100,000 of Paterson manufacturers' miscellaneous expenses. Thirteenth Census of U.S. 1910 IX p.783.

Table 8

No. Estabs.		C A P I T A L				Misc. Exps.	Employees		Cost of Materials Used				Value of Products
		Total	Value Land & Bldgs.	Value Mchry.	Live Assets		No.	Value Wages	Raw Silk + Princip. Mats.	Fuel	Rent	Other	
1890													
Paterson	90	12,533,000	1,507,000	3,546,000	7,479,000	891,000	11,596	5,021,000	12,536,000	81,000	32,000	107,000	22,058,000
Pennsylvania	66	9,362,000	1,462,000	2,941,000	4,957,000	939,051	9,522	2,981,000	11,806,000	63,000	9,000	214,000	19,357,000
1900													
Paterson	136	19,025,000	2,367,000	5,086,000	11,571,000	2946,000	16,704	7,026,000	13,944,000	161,000			26,006,000
Pennsylvania	121	20,894,000	4,179,000	6,696,000	10,017,000	2451,000	21,904	5,347,000	19,710,000	174,000			31,072,000
1910													
Paterson	276	26,446,000				6832,000	20,099	10,326,000	19,205,000	314,000			40,358,000
Pennsylvania	226	49,679,000				6872,000	38,178	13,573,000	34,669,000	495,850			62,061,000

Source: 1890 Census XII pp.426-9, XIII pp.211-212    1900 Census VIII pp.570-1, 768-9,  
1910 Census IX pp.782-3, 1100-1101.



in a review of the Pennsylvania silk industry. "It was more reliable labor, and it was less liable to labor troubles, which are incident to Paterson", he contended.<sup>1</sup>

The "cheapness" of labor was inextricable from the problem of "labor troubles". In Pennsylvania, as the table suggests, silk manufacturers were prepared to invest in new plant and machinery, assured that the workforce was unlikely to resist technological change on the same scale as in Paterson. As a result the annex industry boomed. By 1910 investment in Pennsylvania was almost double that in the New Jersey city. In terms of raw materials consumed, workers employed and value of products, the Pennsylvania annexes far outstripped Paterson mills.

Although the Pennsylvania industry was pictured by contemporaries as in direct competition with Paterson mills, there are two important correctives to this view, both essential to understanding the centrality of the labor question in the rise of annexes. Annexes were founded primarily as centres for the silk throwing branch of the industry, and as such offered little serious competition to Paterson. Much of the Paterson throwing trade was farmed out on commission to small specialised concerns, or was conducted by the larger firms as a separate operation from the weaving of silk. When the advantages of Pennsylvania locations became evident the smaller firms either moved west or struggled on in Paterson. The

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<sup>1</sup>Ind.Comm. 1900 XIV p.703.

larger concerns simply shut down their throwing departments in New Jersey and opened up annexes.

Initially the movement was viewed with little concern by Paterson residents. Paterson will become "a city of looms and not of spindles....the day is not far distant when no silk will be thrown in Paterson" the American Silk Journal predicted in 1890. Yet as long as the New Jersey industry continued to expand Paterson prospects seemed assured, for "...looms (are) taking the place in this city of the places made vacant by the removal of spinning machinery".<sup>1</sup> Only with the development of weaving in the Pennsylvania mills, during the 1890s and increasingly in the twentieth century, did the spectre of competition appear more ominous. Even then weaving in Pennsylvania was restricted, for only in Paterson could be found the skilled weavers essential to the production of fancy and high quality silks. Nevertheless, as the weaving of staple products, both broad silks and ribbons, was developed in the annexes, it was increasingly affecting Paterson.

Ownership of annexes by Paterson manufacturers further reduced the extent and effects of competition from the silk annexes. By the turn of the century most large concerns in the New Jersey city had expanded into Pennsylvania or the South. Only the smaller concerns, unable or unwilling to move, felt the full weight of competition. It was Paterson's millhands

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<sup>1</sup>American Silk Journal May 1890.

and municipal officials, not local manufacturers, who suffered most acutely from annex competition. It was they who were continually pressed to accept the dictates of millowners if they wished to preserve their jobs and the city's future as a manufacturing centre.

Dual ownership, rather than competition, was the key feature in manufacturers' drive for reducing labor costs. It was admitted by Franklin Allen, secretary of the Silk Association of America. The "labor element" in Paterson had forced millowners to seek new locations. "Most of these gentlemen who have their establishments in Paterson have established these branches in these other States", he continued, "for the sake of being free of this everlasting labor question which in Paterson dominates the situation". He was equally frank in recognizing the motive behind re-location: "...the evident purpose being to diversify it so that labor troubles in one place will not control the whole industry".<sup>1</sup>

Much as millowners might gibe at hostile local officials, their invective was essentially a veil for a more concerted drive to reduce labor costs. As early as 1886 local businessmen had attacked millowners for using this ploy. Mr John J. Brown "did not think this condition was the result of taxes...it was nothing more than a search for cheap labor". A Paterson

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<sup>1</sup>Ind.Comm.1900 XIV p.680.



real estate dealer echoed the sentiment - "cheaper labor... was all there was in it". An argument ensued - "in a red hot manner" - between the same gentleman and millowner William Strange, "...the former claiming that the whole thing was merely an effort on the part of the manufacturers to secure cheaper labor". Strange, vexed and plainly ill at ease, was eventually to admit the primacy of the wages issue. "Either the wages in Paterson must come down or those in other places go up", he blurted, "for otherwise the Paterson manufacturers could not compete with the others".<sup>1</sup>

In admitting this much Strange indicated that the basis of the attack on municipal government was its relation to the question of cheaper labor; in particular local officials' support of silkworkers in industrial disputes. Lack of co-operation from city authorities in enforcing millowners' dictates was "...the fountain source of the evil which threatens Paterson's supremacy as a manufacturing center", Strange contended:

"Time and time again have the operatives of our mills, satisfied with their wages and treatment, been intimidated and compelled to abandon their employment by unchecked mob violence; and I am convinced that many, if not all, of the serious disturbances which have taken place in our midst in the past, could have been prevented had the proper authorities taken the necessary precaution in the incipient stages of the trouble".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian December 16 1886.

<sup>2</sup>Textile America October 23 1897.

His vehemence was amplified by other millowners. To them the ability of their workers to resist pressure on their living standards was intimately related to Paterson's local administration. The "...apathy of the city government in encouraging her industries and the sleepless agitation of the labor element", had resulted in Paterson's eclipse as the centre of the silk industry.<sup>1</sup>

The growth of the annex industry during the period 1890-1910 was marked by reliance upon the predominantly indigenous labor of the Pennsylvania coalmining regions. It was, in the main, women and child operatives, often the kin of miners. They were employed in the more technologically advanced branches of the industry - throwing and automated weaving - as a semi-skilled workforce, and at substantially lower rates of pay than Paterson's millhands.<sup>2</sup> Native labor was a distinct advantage for manufacturers in Pennsylvania, claimed one spokesman for the industry. While reluctant to admit that workers in the silk annexes were more easily controlled and adapted to new forms of production, he indicated as much. "The improvement in machinery has made it so that domestic help is taken in preference to the foreign", he stressed. "They are more

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<sup>1</sup>American Silk Journal April 1902.

<sup>2</sup>For a comparison of Pennsylvania and Paterson wage rates see U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin 175: Summary of the Report on the Condition of Woman and Child Wage Earners in the United States (Washington, 1916) pp.196-197.

active and have more push".<sup>1</sup> If activity and "push" indicated a willingness to accept wages and conditions rejected by Paterson workers, there was some substance to the claim. For in the New Jersey city, even after the spectre of annex competition loomed large, "...the same spirit of unrest exists as it ever did, because in Paterson there is a conglomeration of all nationalities of the earth, including the Turk and the Assyrian, the Italian, mixtures of Americans, Germans and everything else - a mixture of anarchy and everything else".<sup>2</sup> Not aversion to new machinery and new work routines, but immigrant waywardness was portrayed as the chief source of disputes in New Jersey. Here the ethnic ties of Paterson mill-hands - "a feeling of self-preservation", which, "brings together the laborers of the same nationality" - "...has misled them...into demonstrations very much against their own interests".<sup>3</sup>

Though silk manufacturers were adamant that the peculiar truculence of Paterson workers spurred the relocation of the industry, they soon confronted familiar labor problems in the annexes too. To train and discipline Pennsylvania workers was a formidable undertaking, for they were in large part unaccustomed to factory discipline. "Children of the soil, berry-pickers and herdsmen, street arabs and rough-handed

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<sup>1</sup>Ind.Comm. 1900 XIV p.693.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. p.703.

<sup>3</sup>ibid. p.676.



mechanics had to be educated to handle the most delicate material known", a Paterson annex-owner admitted.<sup>1</sup> The task was not easily or quickly accomplished. As in Paterson, pre-industrial habits and traditions died hard amongst Pennsylvania millhands. "These are pronounced the most unsatisfactory hands possible", an observer remarked, "not that they do not learn readily enough, but because they refuse to work more than a part of the year, and they can be depended upon to refuse to work at the very time when they are most needed".<sup>2</sup> So formidable was the labor problem in some "country" mills that manufacturers commissioned a locomotive to travel daily up and down neighbouring valleys, shuttling workers to and from the factory.<sup>3</sup>

Typically stringent disciplinary measures appeared within the rural mills. And as in Paterson millowners looked to women and children as the source of labor most readily adaptable to factory work. In some cases negro labor was sought, with the same purpose in mind. At a mill in Fayetteville, North Carolina, negroes were required to sign "contracts" entrusting their children to the superintendent, to work and discipline as he saw fit. Reports claimed that the whipping of workers was not unusual in such an environment - "...poor negroes are lashed by their foreman as in the days of slavery", J.P. McDonnell observed.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Textile America October 30 1897.

<sup>2</sup>Textile America September 30 1898.

<sup>3</sup>Ind.Comm. 1900 VII p.224.

<sup>4</sup>American Silk Journal January 1901, National Labor Standard January 24 1903.

If workers in Pennsylvania were less shackled their adjustment to mill life was far from smooth. Millowners complained that the "...rough and clumsy fingers of the unskilled farm boys and girls" resulted in much "costly material wasted".<sup>1</sup> Absenteeism was a problem, even during working hours. "Time work" was introduced in many Pennsylvania mills as a result. It became a persistent source of discord between millowners and their workers, featuring prominently in strike demands of Pennsylvania silkworkers in 1901. Other grievances in the 1901 strike reflect similar tensions stemming from millowners' disciplinary measures. Ailing millhands resented having to seek permission for absences from the workplace. Weavers on "piece rates" demanded the right to measure their own yardage of woven silk, because wastages attributed to them by mill superintendents were subtracted from the yardage they were paid for.<sup>2</sup> Fines for poor work, or in this case, reductions in pay over disputed output, were a common means of disciplining uncooperative workers. Most disconcerting of all to millowners, annex workers began to display collective resistance to the dictates of the factory. In 1901 Pennsylvania silkworkers struck, led by the indefatigable Mother Jones, organizer for the mineworkers' union.<sup>3</sup> Again in 1913, during the famous Paterson strike, annex workers stopped work. Millowners attributed the truculence of Pennsylvania millhands

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<sup>1</sup>American Silk Journal January 1901.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. June 1901.

<sup>3</sup>American Silk Journal January 1907.



to the disruptive influence of miners' union organizers, and to agitators from Paterson who brought "contagious diseases - labor measles".<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the evolving pattern of industrial relations was ominously similar to that in the New Jersey city.

The problem of training and disciplining a new workforce to man the annexes was undoubtedly a major reason for Paterson's continued importance as a silk producing centre. Despite its slower rate of expansion, Paterson's industry continued to grow (Table 8). Local officials, and even silkworkers, were prompt to indicate the advantages of the New Jersey city. Their arguments all emphasized the local workforce of skilled millhands. A workingmen's journal put it thus:

"Manufacturers who tried the experiment of running a portion of their business at a point distant from the parent establishment discovered long ago that the movement was not altogether successful. Among the disadvantages are the loss of time and waste of silk incident upon instructing green hands; the delay and inconveniences of transportation; the uncertainty of communication at times when it is of utmost importance that orders be received and delivery made with promptitude; the lack of facilities for dyeing and finishing, and the greater difficulty in procuring parts of machinery in cases of breakdown, as well as obtaining the thousand-and-one things in the way of mill supplies that are constantly needed and cannot always be provided in advance.... In case of a sudden emergency arising there is no surplus of skilled labor to call upon at the annexes, and this in itself is a serious drawback, since, it is conceded, the American manufacturer more frequently realizes a good profit on some speciality that "catches on" to the popular fancy, and has a brief run and then gives place to some other novelty, than in another way".<sup>2</sup>

Paterson mills came increasingly, although not exclusively,

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<sup>1</sup> Ind. Comm. 1900 XIV-pp.680-681.

<sup>2</sup> United Silk Workers of America, Herald of the United Silk Workers (Paterson, n.d. 1892?) n.p.



to concentrate production on weaving high grade, "specialized" silks, for which skilled hands were indispensable. A local labor activist displayed a rare note of contempt for annex operatives in emphasizing the superiority of Paterson's skilled workers. "Skilled workers here prefer to manipulate the soft or prepared silk", he contended, "any inexperienced hand can manipulate the hard or raw. Besides in three months a Pennsylvania Dutch girl gains as much knowledge of the silk business as her head will hold, while the Paterson girl has snap and go and will have ambition to perfect her work continually; she is still learning after being three years a silk worker".<sup>1</sup> Millowners discovered that low wages and freedom from strikes did not always offset the disadvantages of an inexperienced and ill-disciplined workforce.

Generations of silkworkers in Paterson, whose roots often stretched back to the pre-mechanized industry of Europe, ensured the city would remain an important manufacturing center. As late as 1919 a Paterson millowner admitted:

"The hands of a silk worker are one of his most important assets. Take a man from the fields of Siberia, from the plains of Austria, from Southern Italy, or from a farm in the United States or Sweden ....and it is a different matter to make a silk worker of that man, a very different matter, from taking men who have been brought up in countries where silk is produced, where the very habits and occupations have developed the technique and the kind of hand that makes a silk worker. A man with clumsy awkward hands handling silk warp is a very different factor from the man whose grandfather before him handled the silk fabric".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Textile America October 30 1897.

<sup>2</sup>National Industrial Conference Board Hours of Work as Related to Output and Health of Workers; Silk Manufacturing (Boston, 1919) p.21.

Sam Sherwood, Paterson real-estate agent and chairman of the State Board of Arbitration, confirmed the same in conversations with the city's manufacturers. "The experience which manufacturers have had who have removed from Paterson", Sherwood reported, "is sufficient to teach others the truth of the fact that manufacturing can be carried on successfully only where there is plenty of skilled labor". He continued:

"Only a short time ago I was talking to a well known Paterson manufacturer who has several annexes in country districts and he told me that the waste of material and the loss entailed by the low rate of speed at which machinery had to be run more than counterbalanced the profit made by his firm in consequence of lower wages". <sup>1</sup>

For millowners who continued production of medium-grade silks in Paterson the disadvantages of annexes were not so readily apparent. While manufacturers of fancy silks suffered little direct competition from Pennsylvania mills, the same was not true in the range of staple goods that constituted the bulk of the American market. Here, Paterson millowners lived in the shadow of their competitors with annexes. Rivalry was fierce; survival, at times, appeared desperate. "The manufacturer who runs his mill at a loss", was apparently not unique in Paterson, one observer remarked. He "...does so in the hope that time will bring about happier and more congenial conditions. With many manufacturers in Paterson this hope has been deferred and deferred until they are about ready to

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<sup>1</sup>New Jersey State Board of Arbitration Annual Report of the State Board of Arbitration of New Jersey 1897 (Trenton, 1897) pp.15-16.



give up".<sup>1</sup> Only by reducing production costs could such manufacturers continue in business. Technological innovation and more efficient production were the obvious methods of achieving cheaper production. But the obvious was rarely possible. Paterson's silkworkers resisted every move of their employers to introduce new production techniques or reduce rates of pay. The situation seemed one of deadlock.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century and opening ten years of the new century local manufacturers sought two principal means of breaking that deadlock. Both were designed to undermine workers' resistance to their requirements. On the one hand they sought new sources of labor; a workforce that might prove more amenable to reductions in costs. Further they were anxious to influence local government; in its traditional support for workingmen and in the hindrances it imposed upon manufacturing interests. Neither was an entirely new conception. Paterson's millowners had long been pre-occupied with labor problems. Now with the emergence of competition from cheaper labor areas, the future of manufacturing in the city seemed threatened. Millowners' concerns became closely identified with those of Paterson as a whole. In this atmosphere their recipes for change assumed a new substance.

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<sup>1</sup>Textile America December 18 1897.



Chapter Five

NEW IMMIGRANTS

Immigrants provided the core of Paterson's labor force throughout the city's industrialization. Many were European textile workers whose skills and experience were an important component in the success of the silk industry. The immigrants' attitudes toward work, however, were less attractive to silk manufacturers. Notoriously wayward, immigrant hands proved fiercely resistant to the disruptions of their accustomed work patterns by Paterson's factories. Millowners frequently pictured immigrants as uncontrollable radicals whose employment was an unavoidable hazard. Nevertheless silk manufacturers continued to hire new immigrants to the city; and not without good reason. For millowners, "green" hands were a traditional, and often vital weapon in the struggle to discipline unco-operative workers. As cheap labor or as strikebreakers new arrivals could act as a check on the power of older established groups in the city's mills.

Paterson's Italians appeared little different from their predecessors. The earliest arrivals were textile hands, some arriving at the express wish of silk manufacturers. Like earlier immigrants they were opposed by the city's silkworkers as cheap labor, enabling millowners to lower wages and introduce labor-saving machinery. In turn Italians soon displayed the hostility characteristic of earlier immigrants to many features of factory life and were branded lawless and uncontrollable. Paterson manufacturers planned to use Italian

workers as a method of cutting costs and curbing an unruly workforce. But they quickly found their design rebounded upon them with a vengeance. As earlier, new immigrants were only a short term solution to millowners' problems. In the long run Italians simply swelled the ranks of ill-disciplined and uncooperative laborers.

While the Italian community in Paterson shared in many of the attributes and experiences of earlier immigrants, it also developed new patterns owing to the unique economic and social climate of the 1890s. Italian immigration coincided with economic depression and the beginnings of two troubled decades for the city's silk industry. Gloomy forecasts of a city dependent upon a decaying industry mirrored the desperate conditions of these exotic and impoverished newcomers. Contemporaries did not see the connection between industrial decay and the swelling tide of immigration as entirely fortuitous. When Italians actively challenged the dictates of silk manufacturers they were vilified as "anarchists" and "subversives", hell-bent upon destroying the city's economic life-line. The existence of a small but dedicated group of Italian radicals seemed to confirm the worst doubts about the group as a whole. In these circumstances older immigrant groups, anxious to preserve their status and livelihoods, joined the swelling chorus of opposition to Italian silkworkers.

Peter Frank, an Italian who ran a small fruit store on Division St., Paterson in 1880, was an almost exotic figure.



With the assistance of his family, Frank probably made a comfortable living, supplying produce to silkworkers in his neighbourhood. Theodore Cappel, an Italian weaver who boarded with the family, supplemented Frank's income. But the fruiterer could hardly depend upon fellow countrymen for his patronage. Paterson's Italians amounted to fewer than a hundred persons in 1880. Scattered about the city, they didn't even form an identifiable community. Although Italian immigrants had multiplied more than tenfold by 1890, their presence was still minor compared to the sizeable immigrant populations from northern and western Europe. Not until the following decade did Italians emigrate en masse to Silk City. By the turn of the century almost six thousand Italians had settled there. Ten years later this number had grown to nearer fifteen thousand. They were now the largest foreign born group in the city.<sup>1</sup>

Frank was characteristic of the Italians who drifted into Paterson during the 1870s. Although silkworkers came, so too did laborers, small businessmen such as Frank, hawkers, peddlers and drifters. In 1880 they included four fruit dealers, a "junk dealer", a peanut vendor, a handful of rag-pickers, a shoemaker, a saloon-keeper, a few general laborers and perhaps a dozen silkworkers.<sup>2</sup> They were people who, on the whole,

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<sup>1</sup>Tenth Census of U.S. 1880, I pp.546-551, Eleventh Census of U.S. 1890 XV pp.670-673, 710-711, Twelfth Census of U.S. 1900 I pp.800-3, 876-877, Thirteenth Census of U.S. 1910 III p.136.

<sup>2</sup>Tenth Census of the U.S. 1880, "Manuscript Population Schedules: volume 19, Passaic County, N.J."..



had no specific reason for coming to Paterson. Many had probably moved on from New York. In New Jersey, they hoped, they would find work, an opportunity to prosper. But if luck did not smile on them they could move on again. Their coming and going, it seems, was hardly noticed by local observers.

During the 1880s and increasingly in the ensuing decade the pattern of Italian immigration to the city changed dramatically. Not only did Paterson's Italian colony vastly increase, its basic characteristics altered. The origins of this new immigration were attributable to declining prospects in the homeland and greater opportunities for permanent migration.

Migration was<sup>a/</sup> basic element of the economy of northern Italy during much of the nineteenth century. Tramping craftsmen and artisans formed part of a steady migration to and from France, Switzerland and southern Germany. Carpenters, building craftsmen, blacksmiths and textile workers all travelled regularly throughout the Alpine region, and beyond. Italian silkworkers shuttled back and forth between Lyons, St. Etienne and their homeland, some to practice acquired skills, others to learn new ones. They were supplemented by a seasonal traffic of harvest workers from northern Italy.<sup>1</sup> During the 1880s migration of a more permanent character assumed an increasing importance. A crisis in Italian agriculture forced many off the land. Moreover, a disease of the

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<sup>1</sup>R.F. Foerster The Italian Emigration of Our Times (Harvard, 1919) pp. 129-188.

silk worm seriously retarded the growth of northern Italy's principal industry. Neighbouring countries, the traditional outlets for Italy's surplus population continued to offer salvation for many; but now, new opportunities arose to migrate further afield. Efficient and cheap steamship travel enabled thousands to migrate to South American countries, such as Brazil and Argentina. Some travelled merely as seasonal workers, but many more settled permanently. The United States was another, if considerably less important, attraction to northern Italians. It was to North America, however, that large numbers of the region's textile workers travelled; and to one city in particular - Paterson, N.J., centre of the U.S. silk industry.<sup>1</sup>

From the 1880s the Italian newcomers were attracted by the prospects of responsible positions in the city's expanding silk industry. They revived a pattern that had characterized the earlier immigration of textile hands to Paterson. Many came not directly from Italy, but from the silk regions of France and Switzerland. Expert Italian dyers, induced to emigrate by high wages, had commonly plied their trade in Lyons, St Etienne or Swiss silk shops.<sup>2</sup> It is likely many

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<sup>1</sup>Foerster The Italian Emigration of Our Times (Harvard, 1919) pp 223-319 , A. Milward and S.B. Saul The Economic Development of Continental Europe 1780-1870 (London, 1973) pp.160-165, S.L. Baily "Italians and Organized Labor in the United States and Argentine 1880-1910" in M.H. Engel and S.M. Tomasi eds. The Italian Experience in the United States (N.Y., 1970) pp.111-123.

<sup>2</sup>Heusser History of the Silk Dyeing Industry pp.237, 308-309, 313-315, 320-321, 334.



other Italian silkworkers followed a similar route.<sup>1</sup> A stream of immigrants arriving directly from the northern Italian provinces of Piedmont and Lombardy began in the same decade and accelerated during the 1890s. Not until the twentieth century did Paterson receive substantial numbers of landless peasants from southern Italy.

By 1908 Italians formed the largest ethnic group in Paterson's mills. They were divided almost equally between northerners and southerners. Workers from Lombardy and Piedmont predominated in the weaving branch of the industry; southerners in the city's dye-shops.<sup>2</sup> Like British, French, Swiss and German weavers before them, a surprising number of northern Italians were experienced textile workers prior to their arrival in the United States. In that year a United States immigration commission analysed the occupational background of northern Italian silkworkers in Paterson. Its findings confirmed the remarkable similarity of the northerners' immigration to that of earlier ethnic groups to the city.<sup>3</sup> Almost eighty per cent of northern Italian males in the city's silk mills had worked as textile operatives prior to emigrating.

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian January 11 1886.

<sup>2</sup>Immigration Commission XI passim.

<sup>3</sup>The intention of the Dillingham Commission was, of course, the very opposite. Its members sought to highlight sharp divergences between the "old" and "new" immigration. For a revealing insight into its pre-occupations and biases see O. Handlin Race and Nationality in American Life (Boston, 1957) pp. 93-138.



The figure for females was slightly lower, but still impressive; almost sixty per cent. Revealing as such statistics might appear, they scarcely suggest the extent to which their background would shape the response of Italians to work in the city's factories.

Biella, wool manufacturing centre of Piedmont, and the Como region, heart of Lombardy's silk industry, were principal sources of emigration to Paterson during the 1890s.<sup>1</sup> From both areas emigrant workers left industries still undergoing the basic transformation from handicraft production to a mechanized factory system. As in most Western countries textiles were the pioneers of Italian industrialism but until the late nineteenth century they remained scarcely comparable to the mills of Manchester, or Paterson. Wool production had been an important industry in northern Italy since medieval times. During the nineteenth century it was concentrated in the Biella region, north-east of Turin, where ample water supplies from Alpine streams provided power. Here a flourishing mill town developed. By the 1860s it boasted almost a hundred mills, employing more than six thousand hands.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, this concentration masked the backwardness of the Italian wool industry. Mechanization was only slowly adopted. As late as 1900, one half of the looms and one third of the spindles in the industry were still hand operated.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Immigration Commission, XI pp.18-19, C.C. Altarelli, "History and Present Condition of the Italian Colony of Paterson, N.J." (Masters' thesis, Columbia 1911) pp.2-3. La Questione Sociale November 15 1896, May 15 1897.

<sup>2</sup>L. Tilly "Italy" in C.L. and R. Tilly The Rebellious Century 1830-1930 (London, 1975) pp.102-4.

<sup>3</sup>S.B. Clough The Economic History of Modern Italy (New York, 1964) pp. 15, 20-21, 62-64.

Northern Italy's silk industry differed little in essential characteristics from the wool industry. Luxurious Italian silks had been famous since Renaissance times. Moreover Lombardy and Piedmont were the centre of European sericulture. Throughout much of the nineteenth century silk - both raw and spun - was the staple of Italy's export trade. The raw material was sent to the silk centres of France, Switzerland, Germany and England. During the century a silk throwing industry was also developed, and from Italy spun silks were exported to weaving centres abroad. Throwing mills sprung up throughout the hilly regions of Piedmont and Lombardy, most powered by Alpine water. Unlike wool, however, the silk industry was geographically decentralized. More often than not mills were in rural settings, employing local peasant labor, and financed by German or Swiss millowners wanting a cheap and plentiful supply of prepared silk for their own weavers.<sup>1</sup> Silk weaving, a traditional handicraft industry in the region, also developed during the nineteenth century, although it remained much less important than silk reeling or throwing as an export industry.

By the mid-nineteenth century silk throwing mills in northern Italy were employing 150,000 workers. Most hands were

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<sup>1</sup>L. Cafanga "Italy" in C.M. Cipolla ed. The Fontana Economic History of Europe: The Emergence of Industrial Societies (London, 1973) pp.279-281, L.A. Tilly "The Working Class of Milan 1881-1911" (unpub. Ph.D., Toronto, 1973) pp.140-141. M.F. Neufeld Italy: School for Awakening Countries: The Italian Labor Movement in its Political, Social and Economic Setting from 1800-1960 (Ithaca, 1961) p.30.



employed part-time on a seasonal basis. At busy times of the year, when the cocoons were harvested and raw silk reeled from them, whole villages might turn their hands to the task. A few months later the same villagers would be fully employed harvesting local crops. The industry was part of a rural economy, essentially pre-industrial. Mechanization and factory organization of silk throwing had taken place early in the nineteenth century in many parts of Europe. In Italy it was the most advanced branch of the industry, but here scarcely comparable to mill life in more industrialized countries. Silk weaving in Lombardy remained predominantly a handicraft industry as in other European centres. In 1876 there were a mere 250 mechanical looms in Italy alongside 12,000 hand looms. Twenty years later, although the number of mechanical looms had risen to 3,000, they were still outnumbered 4:1 by handlooms.<sup>1</sup>

Women and children formed the bulk of the workforce in Italy's rural mills. Many were the wives and daughters of peasant farmers whose earnings were an important supplement to the family income. More importantly their employment reflected the familiar problem of disciplining a new labor force to factory work. All the problems associated with the transition to a new work routine were evident, even though mechanization was not very advanced in many mills. Absenteeism was frequent and vexing to millowners.<sup>2</sup> Rosa, an Italian emigrant to

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<sup>1</sup>L. Cafanga "Italy" pp.306, Neufeld Italy pp.141-2.

<sup>2</sup>Clough Economic History of Modern Italy p.143.



America who worked in various Lombardy silk mills as a girl, described how one of her bosses attempted to overcome this same problem. "At first the boss had all farm girls", she remarked, "but they always left when there was work in the fields, so he liked better to have us girls from the village".<sup>1</sup> Discipline was frequently harsh. It was not uncommon for a millowner to punch young girls in the face for neglect of their duties. In another mill, the owner simply avoided the burden of controlling unreliable labor by transferring responsibility for mill discipline to a nearby convent. Convent children manned the mill with nuns acting as overseers. In return the millowner contributed liberally to church funds.<sup>2</sup>

Important though textile mills were as harbingers of a new industrial system in northern Italy, many were primitive compared to the technologically advanced mills in many parts of Europe. Hand driven machines were still common late into the nineteenth century, and the pace of work determined by human rather than mechanical capabilities.<sup>3</sup> Moreover if work in Lombardy's rural mills was markedly different from traditional tasks in an agricultural society, it was not simply divorced from familiar routines. Silk production was often seasonal.

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<sup>1</sup>M. Hall Ets Rosa: The Life of an Italian Immigrant (Minnesota, 1970) p.139.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. pp.118, 87-91.

<sup>3</sup>ibid. pp.77-78, Cafanga "Italy" pp.297-306.

In the mulberry growing areas of northern Italy the two were intimately connected. During the summer whole villages would hatch silkworms in their homes for local silk merchants. The women would tend the worms, whilst their husbands spent the day picking mulberry leaves to feed them. Mill work was suspended, and childworkers such as Rosa sent out into the fields in their fathers' absence. Even when the mill was functioning normally work was regulated in traditional ways. Feste, religious holidays, might halt production for the day. Sunlight determined working hours. "We had no whistle - no certain hour to go to work - in my time", Rosa noted. "So long as we could see we worked. In the summer we started at four or five o'clock in the morning, in the winter not so early. With the daylight we came and with the daylight we went". Tales of gaslit mills in Milan filled the young girl with awe. Moreover she looked unfavourably upon a system that would end the winter evenings when "...we had more time...and we did other things".<sup>1</sup>

As mechanization and factory organization developed in the textile industry towards the end of the nineteenth century, the region's workers also began to organize. Labor combinations were outlawed in Italy prior to Unification, and even after severely hampered by a government which usually declared strikes illegal. Mutual aid societies, usually of local rather

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<sup>1</sup>ibid. pp.30-34, 79-84, 18-19, 77, 101.

than trade standing, became the vehicle for collective action. Even so organization was sporadic. Often it required the leadership of the anarchist followers of Bakunin, doyen of the anarchist wing of the First International.<sup>1</sup>

Concentrating their activities amongst the textile workers of the north, these radicals formed "Leagues of Resistance" and, during the 1870s and 1880s, led a series of spectacular strikes. Biella, the most concentrated area of textile production, was the scene of bitter industrial struggles in the 1860s, and again in 1877 when workers there struck for more than three months. In the rural silk producing areas traditions of organization were probably less marked. Certainly the increasing mechanization of the textile trades, which ended homework and increased the employment of children, was a severe blow to collective organization. It resulted in the emigration of many textile workers from the Alpine provinces.<sup>2</sup> Where organization took place it usually only achieved a temporary solidarity, centred on specific issues. The new work routines and social relations of industrial production were only slowly teaching peasant weavers the necessity of permanent and effective organization. Thus

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<sup>1</sup> Clough Economic History of Modern Italy pp.151-156, H.L. Gaultieri The Labor Movement in Italy (New York, 1946) pp.7-14, R. Hotstetter *passim*. The Italian Socialist Movement : Vol. I Origins 1860-1882 (Princeton, 1958). N. Pernicone "The Italian Labor Movement" in E.R. Tannenbaum and E.P. Noether eds. Modern Italy: A Topical History Since 1861 (New York, 1974) pp.197-227.

<sup>2</sup> D. Horowitz The Italian Labor Movement (Harvard, 1963) pp. 38-41, Neufeld Italy p.189.



violent outbursts rather than disciplined trades unionism were to be expected. An observer of the transition from domestic to factory production noted the characteristic response of Biella's textile hands:

"It is necessary to remember that in those pre-socialist times the working class was a crowd, not an army. Enlightened, orderly, bureaucratic strikes were impossible. The workers could only fight by means of demonstrations, shouting, cheering and cat-calling, intimidation and violence. Luddism and sabotage, even though not elevated into doctrines, had nevertheless to form part of the methods of struggle". 1

During the 1890s continuing mechanization in the textile industry coupled with economic and political crisis in Italy spurred the emigration of Italians. Disease amongst silkworms disrupted sericulture in Lombardy. A tariff war with France in the late 1880s and 1890s adversely affected the raw and spun silk industries. Employment in the silk industry actually declined in the last quarter of the century, mainly due to technological advances; and during the 1890s unemployment was a severe problem. In all branches of textile production women and children were replacing adult male labor.<sup>2</sup> Attempts at collective organization were suppressed. So bad were conditions that silk workers in the North joined the uprising of

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<sup>1</sup>R. Rigola Rinaldo Rigola e il Movimento Operaio nel Biellese (Bari, 1930) p.19 quoted in E. Hobsbawm Labouring Men p.10.

<sup>2</sup>Clough Economic History of Modern Italy pp.65, 144, Immigration Commission IV pp.167-169, D. Mack Smith Italy: A Modern History (Ann Arbor, 1959) p.161.

Southern agricultural workers in 1894. The attacks on radicals following the Fasci uprising, and again after the "Fatti di Maggio in 1898 drove many anarchists and socialists abroad.<sup>1</sup>

Southern Italian emigration to Paterson also increased during the 1890s. They were outnumbered by northerners at first but by 1910 southerners comprised roughly half of Paterson's Italian community. The majority found employment in the city's mills and dyeshops despite the fact that few had previous experience of textile work.<sup>2</sup> Most were typical of the southern contadini flooding into America prior to the First World War: landless peasants fleeing impoverishment. A sizeable proportion of them were Sicilians.<sup>3</sup> The earliest southerners arrived in Paterson as laborers, laying streetcar tracks, sewers and installing other municipal services. Slowly they found employment in the silk mills. The increasing mechanization of silk weaving enabled many to secure formerly skilled occupations; but more importantly they concentrated in the dyehouses, where, for dyers' helpers, heavy manual labor rather than skill was required. By 1910 Italians totalled

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<sup>1</sup> Mack Smith Italy pp.171-177, 191-193, D. Mack Smith A History of Sicily; Modern Sicily After 1713 (London, 1968) pp.483-489, L. Tilly "I Fatti di Maggio: The Working Class of Milan and the Rebellion of 1898" in R.J. Bezucha ed. Modern European Social History (Lexington, 1972) pp.124-158, W. Hilton-Young The Italian Left: A Short History of Political Socialism in Italy (London, 1949) pp.35-36, G. Woodcock Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements (Cleveland, 1962) pp.327-355. On the relationship between Italian emigration and labor activity see J.S. MacDonald "Agricultural Organization, Migration and Labour Militancy in Rural Italy" Economic History Review 2nd series, XVI 1963 No.1 pp.61-75.

<sup>2</sup> Immigration Commission XI pp.32-33.

<sup>3</sup> The background of southern Italian immigrants is well documented. See Mack Smith Sicily, Foerster Italian



over forty per cent of the city's dyeworkers, with southerners predominating amongst them.<sup>1</sup>

Although Paterson's Italians were initially seen as a pool of cheap labor by city millowners they were soon discovered to be no more tractable than previous immigrant silkworkers. Their experience in the Italian textile industry was little preparation for work in Paterson's mills. Many doubtlessly viewed millwork as a short-term prospect, enabling them to return to Italy with enough savings to guarantee them a new status. Some Italian males avoided factory work, preferring manual labor, and as in Lombardy sending their wives and daughters into the mills. This was almost certainly true of many dyers' helpers. In the dyeshops they worked in "teams" of seven or eight, under a master dyer; a form and division of labor probably not unfamiliar to workers from an agricultural background. It was one way of avoiding the impersonal discipline of the weaving shops. Here the master dyer dictated their pace of work. Moreover, here they worked as a unit and not individually as mere appendages to a machine.

Those who entered the weaving mills showed a similar reluctance to submit to the new work discipline required of them. Their waywardness compelled a continuation of the harsh factory rules long familiar in the city. In effect Paterson's

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Emigration, H. Nelli Italians in Chicago 1880-1930: A Study in Ethnic Mobility (New York, 1970) pp.3-21, R.J. Vecoli "Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of The Uprooted" Journal of American History LI December 1964 pp.404-417, J. Lopreato Italian-Americans (New York, 1970) pp.21-35.

<sup>1</sup> Altarelli "History of the Italian Colony", pp.2-4, Immigration Commission XI pp.117-121, Paterson Daily Guardian December 9 1885.



Italians comprised another generation of migrants to industrial society, which had formed the staple of Paterson's labor force for more than half a century, and a continual source of tension in the silk industry. During the 1913 strike liberal journalists visiting the city were aghast at tales of the strict factory rules enforced in Paterson's mills. Silkworkers told them of punitive fines frequently imposed. Absences from the loom during working hours would result in reductions in the weekly pay packet. Fines were imposed for almost every conceivable offense, including reductions in pay for the loss of scissors or hooks by workers who were also required to purchase replacements from the millowner. Punctuality was imperative. Lateness might result in being locked out for a day. "Maybe a girl wastes a little silk", one worker explained, "If they do not know who did it they fine everyone...". Foremen and overseers were constantly scolding workers to "speed-up". "The bosses they holler and curse at you so. The superintendent and forelady they aren't so bad, but they have to holler when the bosses come round". "Pacemakers" were common, to pressure hands to work faster. These were favoured workers given the best silk to ensure rapid production and held up as an example to weavers of poorer silks. Clocks attached to the looms of pieceworkers were "locked up so the workers cannot see". Many claimed yardage was "stolen" from them at the end of the week. If workers questioned the amount attributed to them, they received a standard reply: "What for do you want to know? That girl over there weaves faster than you, you damn kid!" Even if a mill's power supply failed or was cut during the working day, operatives were expected to work after hours,

at no extra pay, to make up the lost time. Similarly on Saturday, usually a half-day, hands were ordered to clean up the mill after work. Again, they went unrewarded. Most iniquitous, but perhaps most revealing, was the system of "contracts", governing pay, mill discipline and length of service, still prevalent at the time of the 1913 strike. Under this system the parents of child workers signed a contract guaranteeing millowners that their child would remain in his employ for at least a year. The millowner would hold back fifty per cent - sometimes more - of the child's wages during the contractual period. If the year was successfully completed accumulated earnings were paid in a lump sum, minus fines and other deductions. If the child was discharged or terminated its employment during the contractual period, all wages set aside were forfeited. Contracts of this sort guaranteed millowners a regular and compliant workforce, and considerable savings if the unscrupulous exercised their powers of dismissal.<sup>1</sup>

Taken as a whole the harsh and primitive disciplinary codes of Paterson millowners were designed to produce a workforce industrious, sober and orderly. That such rules should feature so prominently a half a century after they were first introduced suggests millowners were not altogether successful in their intentions. How could they be when their encouragement

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<sup>1</sup>I. Weed and L. Carey "I Make Cheap Silk", Masses November 1913 p.7. C.I.R. III pp.2586-2587, 2579, 2595-2596. E. Koettgen "Making Silk" International Socialist Review 14 March 1914 pp.551-555, E.G. Flynn "Contract Slavery in Paterson Silk Mills" in Pageant of the Paterson Strike: Official Program (N.Y., 1913) pp.29-31, New York Times April 4, 1913.



of cheap immigrant labour constantly eroded the creation of a stable and disciplined workforce? Furthermore the prominence of the disciplinary question indicates that the work habits and customs of Paterson's silkworkers - and by this time they were predominantly Italian immigrants - necessitated the continuation of punitive measures. Cheap Italian labor might enable manufacturers to reduce costs, but only at the price of an uncooperative and ill-disciplined workforce. For unlike the uprooted peasantry that Oscar Handlin has characterized as forming a pliable labor pool for U.S. manufacturers, Paterson's Italians soon showed signs of collective independence and self-assertion.<sup>1</sup> They were prominently involved in the strikes of 1894, 1901 and 1902. Indeed, in the latter they were the most active group of millworkers. In some industries the "New Immigration" acted as a brake on activism.<sup>2</sup> In American steel-towns, David Brody has shown East European immigrants to have been a "source of stability", enabling industrial managers to control effectively labor for two decades and longer.<sup>3</sup> In Paterson the effect of immigration was markedly different. Here immigrants did not face a giant corporation; moreover, here immigrants brought with them skills and work traditions that

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<sup>1</sup>O. Handlin The Uprooted (Boston, 1951).

<sup>2</sup>For the argument that "new immigrants" stunted native labor radicalism in the United States, see G. Rosenblum Immigrant Workers: Their Impact on American Labor Radicalism (New York, 1973).

<sup>3</sup>D. Brody Steelworkers in America: The Non-union Era (Harvard, 1960) partic. pp.96-124. See Also M. Yudofsky, WHEN WORKERS ORGANISE: NEW YORK CITY IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA (Amherst 1968), Victor R. Greene, THE SLAVIC COMMUNITY ON STRIKE: IMMIGRANT LABOUR IN PENNSYLVANIA ANTHRACITE (Notre Dame, 1968), and Sally M. Miller, THE RADICAL IMMIGRANT (New York 1975).



proved a constant source of friction in the city's factories. As in the steel towns their background offered little to dispose immigrants towards stable and disciplined unionism, but in Paterson it did much to perpetuate a pattern of industrial conflict long evident.

Italian immigrants, then, appeared little different from countless textile operatives who had arrived in the city before them. Their reception, however, marked them apart. The attitudes towards Italians of both silkworkers and many of the city's longer established ethnic groups denied similarities between the two. The timing of the Italians' arrival was fundamental in shaping attitudes. Italian immigrants began arriving at precisely the period in which Paterson's pre-eminence as the centre of the silk industry was coming under threat. They entered a city different in size, complexion, and above all outlook, from that of all previous immigrant groups.

Anti-Italian feeling ran high throughout the 1890s, and increased in the new century. Viewed principally as cheap labor and strikebreakers, Paterson's workingmen heaped scorn upon these newcomers. As early as 1886 a prominent local official warned manufacturers against "bringing cheap labor to Paterson" because it "...would result in riot, as the importation of Chinamen, Italians and other cheap labor was not regarded with favour by the working classes". Alderman John Boylan, representative of the Irish and working class Eighth Ward, voiced a prevalent discontent when he opposed

city contract work being given to anyone who was not a resident laborer and citizen. Unemployment in Paterson, he bellowed, was directly attributable to padrone and their rag-tag followers, who "...could live on stale bananas and macaroni" at half the wages of native workers.<sup>1</sup> Italian strikebreaking can only have added to the disfavour. Strikes against the employment of Italians in the city mills did little to relieve tensions during the 1890s.<sup>2</sup>

As numbers of Italians increased in Paterson mills sporadic attempts were made to form unions amongst them, such as "La Lega dei Tessitori" organized by local Italian radicals in the late 1890s and modelled on the Italian "Leagues of Resistance".<sup>3</sup> More often than not organization took place, if at all, along ethnic lines.<sup>4</sup> It did little to alleviate misgivings about Italians entering the industry. The older English-speaking groups increasingly left the lower paid, unskilled jobs in the industry, surviving in strength only in

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian March 16 1897.

<sup>2</sup>Immigration Commission XI pp.18-19, Paterson Daily Guardian December 16 1886, January 30 1894. Paterson Daily Press April 11 1894, M. Pachman "History of the Dolphin Jute Mills, Paterson, N.J." (Masters dissertation, New York University, 1954) p.76, Altarelli "History of the Italian Colony" p.3.

<sup>3</sup>La Questione Sociale June 30, December 15 1897, Paterson Daily Guardian March 4 1897.

<sup>4</sup>National Labor Standard September 3 1904, Industrial Worker March, May 1906.

the skilled weaving departments. When the United Silk Workers was formed in the early years of the new century, recruiting skilled and predominantly English-speaking workers, it made little attempt to organize those branches in which Italians were most numerous, and positively opposed the affiliation of silk dyers' helpers, who were overwhelmingly Italian.<sup>1</sup>

The extent and rapidity with which Italians supplanted older ethnic groups in the city's mills acted significantly to feed prejudice. Its dimensions can be gleaned from census materials. Italian immigration after 1890 was the most important demographic development in the city prior to the First World War. The group as a whole expanded at a prodigious rate (Table 9). East European Jews constituted the only other major immigrant group during the period, most arriving after 1902.<sup>2</sup> Their impact, in sheer numbers and, more importantly, on communal and work relations, never approached that of the Italians prior to the 1913 strike. The flood of Italian immigration was further exaggerated by a perceptible decrease of population growth in the city as a whole; and, most pertinent, by the near stagnation, and in some cases actual numerical decline, of older ethnic groups (Table 10).

Italian immigration radically altered the ethnic composition of working class areas of the city. Unfortunately

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times June 27 1902, Wood "History of Labor" pp.170-188.

<sup>2</sup>Immigration Commission XI p.19.



Table 9

Growth of Paterson's Italian Community In Relation To Other

Ethnic Groups 1880-1910

		<u>1880<sup>1</sup></u>	<u>1890</u>	<u>1900</u>	<u>1910</u>
City		51,031	78,347	105,171	125,600
Italians	F.b.	89	845	4,266	9,317
	N.b.		197	1,459	5,431
Americans <sup>2</sup>		32,329 <sup>3</sup>	19,730	23,897	32,023
English/	F.b.	6,439	9,499	9,067	7,739
Scots.	N.b.		3,849	5,038	9,757
Irish	F.b.	5,990	7,719	6,714	4,971
	N.b.		7,702	8,281	9,937
Germans	F.b.	2,262	5,649	6,584	5,741
	N.b.		3,398	4,942	7,204

1. Figures for native-born of foreign-parentage unavailable for 1880

2. Americans represent U.S.-born of U.S. parents

3. The 1880 figure for U.S.-born includes U.S.-born of foreign parentage.

(Source: U.S. Census 10th-13th, 1880-1910)

Table 10

Rates of Growth of Paterson's Ethnic Groups 1890-1910<sup>1</sup>

	1890	1890-1900	1900	1900-1910	1910
City	100		134		160
		+34%		+19%	
Italians	100		549		1415
		+449%		+157%	
Americans <sup>2</sup>	100		121		162
		+21%		+34%	
English/ Scots	100		106		131
		+ 6%		+24%	
Irish	100		97		97
		- 3%		-	
Germans	100		127		143
		+27%		+12%	

1. All Ethnic Groups include foreign-born and native-born of foreign-parentage, excepting, of course, Americans, who constitute U.S.-born of U.S.-parentage.
2. The growth of the U.S. group may be exaggerated by the inclusion of third generation immigrants in the figures of Americans. The grandchildren of immigrants may, arguably, belong in another ethnic grouping. Unfortunately, they cannot be distinguished, as in census returns they were characterized as U.S.-born of U.S.-parentage.

(Source: U.S. Census 11-13th, 1890-1910)

Table 11

Ethnic Change in Four Paterson Wards 1905-1915<sup>1</sup>

	<u>1905</u>	<u>1915</u>
Americans	23%	26%
Irish <sup>2</sup>	17%	12%
English/ Scots	16%	11%
Germans	14%	10%
Italians	9%	20%
Others	17%	19% <sup>3</sup>

1. Based on New Jersey Census Returns for the 2nd, 3rd, 8th and 9th Wards.
2. Each ethnic group comprises foreign-born and native-born of foreign-parentage.
3. Based upon a sample of 2,234 persons for 1905 and 2,491 persons for 1915.

(Source: New Jersey State Census, Manuscript Volumes for Passaic County, 1905 and 1915)



census records do not permit quantification of the change during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the years for which detailed information is available, bear striking witness to the impetus of Italian immigration. Analysis of four working class wards, during the period 1905-1915, indicate an abrupt change in the ethnic composition of much of Paterson (Table 11). In a mere decade Italians rose from less than ten per cent to a fifth of the entire population of large working class neighbourhoods. In some areas their weight of numbers was even more dramatic. In the 9th ward for example Italians increased from under 13% of the population in 1905, to almost 30% by 1915.<sup>1</sup> Everywhere Italians clustered a similar pattern evolved: older immigrant groups moved out to make way for them. In the 3rd ward Germans and Dutch departed; in the 9th ward British and Germans; in the 8th ward Irish, British and Germans. The pattern was not always uniform. In some districts certain immigrant neighbourhoods refused to be broken up. In the 9th ward, for example, the Irish community represented a stable 20% of the population throughout the decade, probably residing in an area traversing the boundary between the 8th and 9th wards, a traditional stronghold of Paterson's Irish. Similarly in the 2nd ward all the older ethnic groups showed a reluctance to make way for Italian

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<sup>1</sup>The following statistics are all based upon analysis of the New Jersey State Census, Manuscript Schedules for 1905 and 1915. See also Appendices.

newcomers; thus here Italian immigration was less pronounced than in other working class districts.<sup>1</sup> New immigrants were concentrated in Paterson's old manufacturing districts where rents would be cheapest and travel to and from the mills minimal. Outside of working class neighbourhoods their presence was negligible. In the 5th ward, stretching east of City Hall, and an area of leafy avenues, fine houses and home to Paterson's professional and manufacturing elite, Italians were scarcely visible.<sup>2</sup>

Physical presence alone cannot indicate the impact of Italians on the working lives of Paterson's millhands. During an era when growth in the city's principal industry had been blunted by competition from outlying areas, Italians flooded into the mills. For them work could only be obtained at the expense of other millhands - older immigrants mostly. The proportion of people working declined slightly in three of the four wards analysed. All wards, however, maintained a steady proportion employed in silk manufacturing - varying from 30% of the working population in the 8th ward to over 40% in the 3rd ward.<sup>3</sup> The ethnic composition of that workforce,

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<sup>1</sup>Appendices 1-4. In all four wards native Americans persisted or marginally increased during the period 1905-1915. It is unlikely that Yankees showed characteristics different from Irish or Germans. Their continued importance is almost certainly attributable to census demarcations which classified third generation immigrants as Americans.

<sup>2</sup>Appendix 5.

<sup>3</sup>Appendices 6-9.

especially the mill workforce, changed notably (Table 12). Italians increased from just over 10% of all millworkers in 1905 to 20% a decade later. English, Scots and Germans declined. By 1915 Italians comprised the largest ethnic group in the silk industry; a feature absent from all other occupational groupings in the city. Statistically the change appears notable but not dramatic. Italians were making similar inroads into other leading occupations in the city. However mere percentage points mask the realities of occupational change. Entry of Italians into Paterson silk factories was by far the most important development. Because of the importance of millwork and the sheer size of the mill workforce, the numbers of Italians replacing older ethnic groups assumed an importance absent in all other occupations. Statistics fail to convey the degree to which ethnic change was a starkly visible fact.

The economic condition of the silk industry further accentuated the entry of large numbers of Italians. No other industry faced the same pressure on wages, employment and traditional work practices. The city's metal and machine trades declined considerably during the decade 1905-1915, yet although Italians increased their employment here their presence caused little furore.<sup>1</sup> For one thing they were

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<sup>1</sup>Garber "The Silk Industry of Paterson, N.J." pp.94-99.



Table 12

Leading Occupations and Ethnicity in Four Paterson Wards

1905-1915

1905

	<u>American</u>	<u>Irish</u>	<u>Eng/Scot.</u>	<u>German</u>	<u>Italian</u>	<u>Other</u>
Silk	16	15	18	18	11	20
Metal	18	25	24	14	2	18
W. Collar	33	11	24	17	3	12
Skilled	23	21	19	14	6	18
Unskilled	30	22	11	9	6	19

1915

Silk	16	15	14	14	20	20
Metal	18	24	20	14	7	17
W. Collar	31	19	10	15	5	21
Skilled	25	14	13	11	14	24
Unskilled	30	13	12	8	15	22

(Source: N.J. State Manuscript Census Schedules 1905 and 1915)

confined principally to filemaking in the Kearney and Foote Works in the Third Ward. More importantly their employment required no sizeable reductions in the proportions of older ethnic groups employed. In the expanding white collar occupations Italians made little impact. Even in the skilled and unskilled trades, where again Italians made sizeable inroads, only at times of acute depression, such as in the worst years of the 1890s, did their employment provoke hostility. It was economic objections, brought about by pressure on work and wages in the silk mills that, above all else, underpinned anti-Italian sentiment amongst Paterson workingmen.

Unlike other textile cities such as Lawrence, Massachusetts where a variety of new immigrants displaced the older settlers, Paterson was dominated by Italians.<sup>1</sup> Jews too came in substantial numbers after the turn of the century. But Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Russians and the host of other Eastern European nationalities, who made up America's "new immigration" were notable in Paterson for their absence. This pattern of immigration had important consequences for the way in which Italians were regarded by their fellow millhands. Because they were conspicuous, Italians were saddled with every prejudice, stereotype and animosity typically aimed at exotic newcomers to America.

Tom Morgan, a native-born loomfixer who, in 1913, had

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<sup>1</sup>D.B. Cole Immigrant City: Lawrence, Massachusetts 1845-1921 (N. Carolina, 1963).

worked in the city for more than two decades, put it thus:

"....as the standard of wages went down the class of workers that came in got poorer". That "poorer class" was identifiably Italian.<sup>1</sup> The English-speaking groups that remained in Paterson's silk mills did so in the skilled branches of the industry, such as warping and loomfixing and in some branches of the ribbon weaving trade. Here they formed small and exclusive craft unions, anxious to keep at arm's length "...immigrants coming into the trade who did not thoroughly understand the workings of our organization or had not become Americanized, and the manufacturers hiring those foreigners at all kinds of wages...."<sup>2</sup>

Tom Morgan's concerns about Italian newcomers were shared by other Paterson residents, although often for very different reasons. Squalor and disease were early associated with Paterson's Italians. In 1882 the Board of Aldermen instructed the city's Health Committee "...to take some measures relative to the improvement of the filthy conditions of the Italian quarters of the city". The local press greeted the directive with a howl: "The Italian must go!"<sup>3</sup> The same month eight Italians were arrested for stealing. County Jail Warden Buckley found them "....utterly filthy and unutterably afraid

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III pp.2423.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. p.2612.

<sup>3</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian January 10, February 3, 1882.



of water..."; searching their clothes he found them to "... fairly bristle with weapons of a deadly character...knives, stiletoes, daggers and other weapons".<sup>1</sup> Perceived as degraded and filthy, violent and criminal, Italians were hardly greeted as most desirable newcomers. Moreover the stigma attached to them does not appear to have diminished as their numbers increased. In 1885 a local journal noted that "...Italian "dagos" employed on the line of the Erie (railroad) are finding shelter during the cold weather in old and condemned cars, which are frequently robbed by fellow scoundrels of the occupants".<sup>2</sup> A decade later, at the height of the 1894 depression, a Citizens' Relief Committee investigating applicants for alms reprimanded Italians as "shirkers" and "imposters". "Many who sought relief were Italians whose cases looked suspicious", announced millowner William Strange, head of the Relief Committee," and the full amount was not given to them until an investigation could be made".<sup>3</sup> A leading Italian citizen was employed by the Committee to investigate countrymen who applied for assistance, but was subsequently charged with favouritism and dismissed. Father Julian, priest at the Italian church, faced the same charge.<sup>4</sup> Neither inspired

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian January 13 1882.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian December 9 1885.

<sup>3</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian December 27 1893.

<sup>4</sup>ibid. December 30 1893, January 5, 6 and February 9 1894.

confidence nor could hope to counter the widespread, "deep rooted prejudice" against Italian shirkers and ne'er-do-wells.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, local workingmen called for a "Tariff on immigration" to reduce the legions of unemployed. The "Italian basket army" on their daily sojourn to the relief centre, were the butt of "numerous jokes...cracked at their expense while they were passing down Ellison Street". Humour often masked bitter resentments. An Italian hauled into court for throwing away food provided as charity was fined \$26. The local justice, in passing sentence, delivered a stinging reminder to Italians throughout the city: "The laws of this country unfortunately allow such men as you to come here, but there is no provision in them for feeding you. When you abuse the charity of Americans you must and shall be punished".<sup>2</sup>

Economic depression revealed not only the extent of poverty amongst Italians, but also nativist contempt and disgust of newcomers. One Relief Committee inquirer, an eminent local lady, "had an unpleasant experience" when Italians appeared "in large numbers to meet her", for the "filth was more than she could endure, and when she was leaving the Italians followed her".<sup>3</sup> Social reformers and charity workers frequently marked Italians as cases for special treatment.<sup>4</sup> And if it

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<sup>1</sup> ibid. January 5 and 13 1894.

<sup>2</sup> ibid. December 15, January 4, 10 and 11 1894.

<sup>3</sup> ibid. December 27, 30 1893.

<sup>4</sup> Twentieth Annual Report of the Paterson Woman's Missionary Society (Paterson, 1893) p.10, William Nelson Collection Box 3, Paterson Public Library, Fifth Annual Report of the Children's Aid and Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Passaic County, N.J. (Paterson, 1902) p.4, Wm. Nelson Collection, Box 13.



was the product of middle-class fastidiousness, distaste for the "swarthy" newcomers, served along with the economic objection to cheap labor, to single out Italians for general vilification.

The association of Italian immigrants with criminality - of a particularly horrific nature - fed prejudice. Lurid accounts of knifings and vendettas were a common feature in the city's newspapers. As early as 1890 a razor fight between two Italians led the City Recorder to warn: "Italian cutting affrays were getting altogether too numerous to be pleasant".<sup>1</sup> Crimes of violence, above all others, were seen as the hallmark of Italian lawlessness. A local clergyman was quick to point out that arrest figures showed Italians to be more law-abiding than other ethnic groups; only "...in crimes against the person" did "Italians maintain the record".<sup>2</sup>

The violent activities of organized gangs of Italians proved most disturbing. Fears of secret societies - the Mafia and the Camorra - swept America following the assassination of a police superintendent by Sicilians in New Orleans in 1891.<sup>3</sup> "Black Hand" groups - extortionists, who usually threatened the non-cooperative with bombing - appeared in

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Press January 2 1890.

<sup>2</sup>Altarelli "The Italian Colony of Paterson" p.14.

<sup>3</sup>J. Higham Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925 (New York, 1973 ed.) pp.90-92, H. Nelli The Business of Crime (New York, 1976) pp. 69-100.



cities throughout the country. Although most were small, independent groups of villains, they were frequently portrayed in popular journals as part of a highly organized, conspiratorial network transplanted to America from Mafia strongholds in Sicily and southern Italy. In 1904 the New York Police Department established its own "Italian Squad" headed by the fabled Joseph Petrosino, to root out the evil. It met with little success - Petrosino being assassinated on an investigative mission to Sicily in 1909 .<sup>1</sup>

Paterson spawned its own share of Black Hand crimes and criminals. Most were not dissimilar from elsewhere. In 1912, for example, a hotel proprietor who ignored demands from a Black Hand outfit had his property blown up.<sup>2</sup> Moreover there was scattered evidence that some Italians in Paterson were seeking to control other avenues of illegality typically associated with organized crime. In 1906 for example Federal Secret Service agents claimed to have smashed an Italian lottery ring - "Lotto Publico Italia" - established in the city.<sup>3</sup> Similarly Police Chief Bimson's attacks on the Italian-run Turn Hall were prompted by concerns that its owners were

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<sup>1</sup>Nelli Business of Crime pp. 95-98. , J. Landesco "Organized Crime in Chicago" in Illinois State Government, Illinois Crime Survey (Chicago, 1929) pp.15-41, D.L. Chandler The Criminal Brotherhoods (London, 1976) pp.67-72. Even as learned and judicious a body as the (Dillingham) Immigration Commission confirmed the popular stereotype of lawless and violent Italians. Immigration Commission IV pp.209-210.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian February 9 1912.

<sup>3</sup>Paterson Evening News October 8 and 23 1906.

harbouring prostitutes and encouraging illegal gambling and drinking. Bimson ordered a ban on "scandalous" and "immoral" dances, such as the "Grizzly Bear", the "Bunny Hug", the "Turkey Trot" and the "African Slide" frequently in evidence there. The Chief all but accused his own officers of succumbing to bribery, claiming they ignored the "new fangled dances" and the "drinking rooms on the back of saloons where young girls could be found drinking with men".<sup>1</sup> When Bimson re-organized the city police force in 1907 it is hardly surprising that he established his own "Italian Squad".<sup>2</sup>

No "White Hand" appeared in Paterson to dispel the association of Italians with crime.<sup>3</sup> Indeed the city's newcomers seemed too divided amongst themselves to combine effectively for their own common defense. Northern Italians would not deign to mix with southerners, and vice versa. At times mutual antagonism could take a more active form. As early as 1882 Peter Frank, the prominent Italian fruit dealer and a Neapolitan, claimed a "vendetta" had been launched against him by northerners in the city, who were jealous of his appointment as a "special policeman" in the Italian quarter of the city.<sup>4</sup> Whether more than envy motivated northerners' opposition to policeman Frank is unknown. The animosity of north Italian millhands to southerners entering the silk industry suggests a deep rift between the two.<sup>5</sup> The two

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian February 2, January 29 1912.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Evening News April 6 and 10 1907, C. Vreeland Who's Who in Passaic County (Paterson 1917) p.13.

<sup>3</sup>Nelli The Italians in Chicago pp.125-155.

<sup>4</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian January 5 and 31 1882.

<sup>5</sup>Altarelli "The Italian Colony of Paterson N.J." p.3.



groups were divided by language and culture. Immigrants from Lombardy and Piedmont frequently associated with French textile workers. Some had probably worked in the French silk industry prior to emigrating; many possibly understood and spoke the French language better than the dialect of the southern paesani. They lived apart from southerners, and usually worshipped in different churches. Our Lady of Victories, where many northerners took the sacrament, was originally the church of the city's French immigrants, but shared with northern Italians.<sup>1</sup>

The extreme parochialism of Italian immigrants made group solidarity difficult. Divisions within even the larger groupings of northerners and southerners produced loyalties that often stemmed from a single Italian village. Thus mutual aid societies, a possible base for city-wide organization, numbered almost thirty by 1910. By 1911 the Sons of Italy was organized in Paterson to unite the scores of independent benefit societies nationally as well as locally. Nevertheless old habits die hard. One local observer remarked that Italians "...so divided patronize the doctor, the grocer, the wine dealer and even the priest coming from their own place".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Altarelli "The Italian Colony of Paterson N.J." pp.3-4, W. Nelson and C. Shriner History of Paterson and Its Environs (New York, 1920) I pp.473-474, Paterson Daily Guardian May 24 1882.

<sup>2</sup>Altarelli "The Italian Colony of Paterson N.J." p.20, A. Baldo L'Ordine Figli d'Italia in America (New York, 1925) p.237, E.L. Biagi The Purple Aster: A History of the Order, Sons of Italy (New York, 1961) pp.15-18.



Italians faced prejudice and animosity from many directions. The local chapter of the American Protective Association successfully opposed efforts to fund a school for teaching immigrants the English language.<sup>1</sup> The local Catholic Church probably neglected them also. Not until 1903 did it secure an Italian priest.<sup>2</sup> Although four Italian journals were being published in the city by the early years of the twentieth century, one of these was an anarchist publication and the others appear to have little influence beyond their limited constituencies.<sup>3</sup> More important, politically Italians appear to have exercised little weight. The political machines, traditional avenue of advancement and acceptance for immigrant communities continued, prior to World War One, to be heavily dominated by the city's older ethnic groups - Irish, British and Germans. If an Italian mayor was unlikely, perhaps an Italian alderman or city official was less so. Either was a rarity. A glance through lists of city officials in the opening decade and a half of the twentieth century suggests the extent to which Italians were excluded from any position of consequence. Even in those occupations regarded as rewards for political support Italians were notably absent. The roster of

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Evening News February 2 1900.

<sup>2</sup>St John's Roman Catholic Parish Church, Historical Souvenir 1821-1921 (Paterson, 1921) p.23.

<sup>3</sup>American Newspaper Directory, Thirty Third Edition (New York, 1901), Ayers American Newspaper Annual 1906 (Philadelphia, 1906).

city firemen in 1913 apparently included no Italians. The three Italian policemen in 1913 reflected not so much political "pull" as the problems Paterson's Police Chief confronted in maintaining law and order in the city's "Little Italies".<sup>1</sup> The one Italian who achieved considerable political success, did so on a platform attacking corruption in public life. Henry Marelli, Paterson-born son of an Italian weaver and himself a millhand as a teenager, was educated at Rutgers University before establishing a law practice in his home town. As both "Avvocato Italiano" and defense lawyer to striking millhands, Marelli remained closely identified with Paterson's Italian immigrants. Politically, he rose to prominence in the local Republican Party, twice being elected to the State Assembly as a Passaic County representative. On each occasion he supported a platform pledged to oppose the machine candidate and supporting reform of state and local government.<sup>2</sup>

Marelli remained the exception. Few Italians achieved positions of political influence. The local machines doubtlessly bargained with community leaders and "ward heelers" for the "Italian vote" at elections, but the price paid for that support must have been small. Many Italians, recent immigrants and not naturalized, were voteless. Even the enfranchised

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<sup>1</sup> Annual Report of the City Officers 1913. pp. 278-289, 309-317, Paterson Evening News April 6 1907.

<sup>2</sup> Nelson and Shriner History of Paterson II pp. 127-128, "Henry Marelli Folder", Rutgers Alumni File - Class of 1897, New Jersey Archives, Rutgers University, Legislature of New Jersey 1906 pp. 334, 494-496, Paterson Evening News September 26 1906.



probably lacked the organization and consciousness of their potential bargaining power to effectively utilize it. When a community leader emerged he was far from assured a disciplined and compliant following, as Justice Robert Cortese discovered. Cortese was one of a handful of Italians who exercised some political influence. Son of an Italian saloonkeeper and raised in a heavily Italian neighbourhood, Cortese rose to the office of local Justice of the Peace. Although a position of no great importance it provided scope for graft, and had been proffered in return for service to local politicians.<sup>1</sup> Cortese had various allegiances with local politicians and community leaders. His assistance was often sought by Paterson's Police Department in its searches for Italian suspects; Cortese, in turn, sought appointment to the police force. Moreover Cortese's cousin was Joe Puglia, a contractor who had important contacts with local government officials. Puglia, known as "mayor" of Paterson's Italian colony, was like Cortese another minor figure in machine politics.

On the 8th February 1907 Cortese's modest career came to an abrupt end. A bomb deposited in his office on Passaic Street blew him to pieces.<sup>2</sup> The assassination caused uproar in the city. It also revealed the extent to which simmering hostility towards Italians was never far from boiling over. Cortese's death was attributed to "Black Handers". His

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<sup>1</sup>State of New Jersey Report of the Commission of Immigration of the State of New Jersey 1914 (Trenton, 1914) pp.105-110, 136-137, 185.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Evening News February 9 1907.



prominence in the detection and arrests of Italian criminals had apparently gained him enemies. Certainly some resented a public career gained at the expense of fellow paesane. Others perhaps disliked Cortese's disregard of omerta, the code of honor founded upon hostility to public authorities. On the murky borderline between political favors, corruption and organized crime, deaths such as Cortese's were perhaps to be expected. Nevertheless it raised a furore across the city. The familiar stereotypes of Italian criminality were bandied in the press. Citizens' meetings were convened to protest the murder.

Despite an apparent unanimity of abhorrence, Henry Marelli clearly recognized the danger such outrage posed for his fellow immigrants. He was quick to refute the tag of "lawlessness".<sup>1</sup> His efforts were of little avail however. For nativist feeling combined not only ethnic slurs but was positively identified with the activities of Italian silkworkers. The city's millhands were portrayed as anarchist hoodlums, and the murder the result of an "anarchist plot". Though connections between disorderly millhands and Cortese's death were far from clear, rumors to the effect were pervasive.

In the opening decade of the new century anti-Italian feeling assumed a new dimension, colored both by the economic condition of the city and by the disorderly behaviour of

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<sup>1</sup>ibid. February 11 and 12 1907.

immigrant millworkers. The fusion of xenophobia with concerns for the future of the silk industry produced a distinctive nativism in Paterson; and one which the Italians, lacking political and social influence, were particularly ill-equipped to combat.

The association of Italian criminality with anarchist activity was not novel or unique to Paterson although it produced there an hysteria more important for its relationship to local relations than to national, nativist sentiment. Throughout the 1890s U.S. magazines contained articles discussing the problem of Italian immigration, and in particular the violent criminal and political traditions of Mediterranean newcomers. Anarchists, brigands and mafiosi were frequently pictured as natural and mutually contented bedfellows, each sharing a common outlook and interest.<sup>1</sup> Recent scholars of the Mafia have indicated otherwise. The organization acted not as a breeding ground for social protest and revolt but rather to stifle it. It was a principal means by which southern Italian gabellotti controlled their tenants and share-croppers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>S. Merlino "Camorra, Maffia and Brigandage" Political Science Quarterly 9, September 1894 pp.466-485; S. Cortesi "The Last Italian Brigand" The Independent 54, May 22 1902 pp.1240-1242; G. Tosti "Anarchistic Crimes" Political Science Quarterly 14 1899 pp.404-417. The latter claimed that: "Men like Caserio, Angiolillo and Luccheni (famous anarchist assassins) do not become assassins because they are more or less imbued with the most superficial aspects of the theory of anarchism, but simply because they are born criminals". p.413. S. Cortesi "Anarchy In Its Birth-place" Independent 53, October 3 1901 pp.2346-2348.

<sup>2</sup>E.J. Hobsbawm Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries (Manchester, 1971 ed.) pp.30-56, which reviews much recent work on the Mafia.



In the "nationalist nineties" such distinctions were rare.<sup>1</sup> Popular conceptions of anarchists as criminals with roots in the secret societies of southern Italy found expression in the linking of "black hand" crime with bomb throwers. One contemporary noted that in Sicily the Mafia was modelled on the Spanish Mano Nigra, "...claiming as its ultimate aim the establishment of the 'universal republic'".<sup>2</sup>

In Paterson Italian lawlessness was early associated with striking millhands. During the industrial disorders of 1894, when millowner William Strange had been the target of a bomb plot, the Paterson Daily Press published an editorial attacking riotous strikers:

"The Hoodlum is the dread of the police force of any city where disturbances of the peace are rife.

Of late years the ranks of the Hoodlum have been greatly swelled by young boys brought or sent here from other countries, mainly from Italy, to pick up a living on our streets.

They pass most of their time idling, fighting and gambling." <sup>3</sup>

The sentiment was echoed by Judge Hopper, who, in sentencing the Strange bombers, noted that: "Most, if not all, of the men engaged in these acts of violence were of foreign birth and were either blindly ignorant or wilfully regardless of

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<sup>1</sup>Higham's description in Higham Strangers in the Land pp.68-105.

<sup>2</sup>Nelli The Business of Crime p.277, Merlino "Camoora, Maffia and Brigandage" p.481. For the Black Hand in Spain and rural anarchism see G.A. Waggoner "The Black Hand Mystery: Rural Unrest and Social Violence in Southern Spain, 1881-1883" in R.J. Bezucha ed. Modern European Social History (Lexington, Mass.; 1972) pp.161-191.

<sup>3</sup>Paterson Daily Press July 10 1894.



the rights and privileges of free American citizens".<sup>1</sup> Although "foreign born anarchists" were spotlighted as the activists in the 1894 disorders, they were not yet identifiably Italian. No "Black Hand" was seen to have lit the fuse of the Strange bomb.<sup>2</sup> Yet within a decade Paterson's Italians were singled out as anarchist subversives, hell-bent on wrecking the city's economy and the political fabric of the whole nation. Events in the city between 1900 and 1902 endowed such a notion with at least some credence.

In July 1900 an Italian foreman at a leading Paterson dyehouse was shot dead by a fellow countryman, Louis Caraboni, who in turn killed himself. No motive for the murder was readily apparent but hearsay circulated in the local press. Caraboni, a proclaimed anarchist, was pictured as avenging fellow Italians fired by his victim, "a tyrant...who respected nobody and maltreated his countrymen and workmen". "Secret societies" and the "Mafia" were rumored to have plotted the slaying. There was some suggestion that a mysterious letter found on Caraboni indicated that his name had been drawn in an anarchists' lottery to assassinate the King of Italy. Certainly a meeting of anarchists in a saloon on Straight Street did little to dispel such forebodings. The assembled collected

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian August 8 1894.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. May 23, June 1, 27 and 28 1894.

one hundred dollars to provide Caraboni with a fitting burial and proclaimed him a "hero".<sup>1</sup> The significance of Caraboni's actions became evident a week later when Gaetano Bresci, a fellow Italian anarchist from Paterson, assassinated King Humbert in northern Italy.

A sizeable contingent of Italian anarchists and radicals had established themselves in Paterson since the mid-1890s. Bresci, a silk weaver from Prato, Tuscany who had emigrated to Paterson in 1898, was not a prominent figure amongst them, yet in many respects typified the cluster of radicals in the city. Bresci had been arrested along with fellow activists in 1895 following the suppression of the Fasci uprising and the Italian Socialist Party. Released in an amnesty he fled to America.<sup>2</sup> Similar difficulties accounted for the presence of other anarchists in Paterson, many of them more eminent figures than the humble Tuscan. Most had arrived during the 1890s as a result of political persecution in Italy and, like Bresci, most remained engrossed in the affairs of their homeland. They comprised a small and secretive group, seemingly uninterested in American affairs and scarcely noticeable in Paterson. The

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian July 19, 20 and 24 1900, Paterson Daily Press July 19 and 20 1900, Newark Evening News July 19 and 30 1900.

<sup>2</sup>L.V. Ferraris "L'Assassinio Di Umberto I E Gli Anarchici Di Paterson" Rassegna Storica Del Risorgimento 50 March 1968 March 1968 pp.54-55, New York World Clipping, S. Merlino La Difesa Di Gaetano Bresci (Paterson, 1917). A. Cipriani Bresci e Savoia (Paterson, n.d.) - all in the Labadie Collection, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.



bulk of their energy and resources was devoted to the publication of a weekly journal, La Questione Sociale.

Upon the arrival of these Italian dissidents the Socialist Labor Party sought new followers in Paterson. It gained a number of important supporters during the 1890s, and for a time Paterson's Italians seemed likely to spur a sustained recruitment drive amongst the nation's newcomers. The most prominent amongst them was Bernadino Verro, a Socialist and organizer of the Sicilian fasci who arrived in America in the mid-1890s. Centred in Paterson, Verro travelled extensively throughout the Eastern States lecturing to Italian immigrants and organizing local branches of the S.L.P. amongst his countrymen. Within Paterson his work focused upon recruiting Italians to the flourishing (in the 1890s) S.L.P. local, and more importantly, editing Il Proletario, the Italian language journal of the party. For a time Verro's efforts promised rewards. "The movement in Paterson is going on very well", a local Italian wrote to Henry Kuhn, secretary of the S.L.P. in May 1897. The Paterson Italian section had purchased a bookstore and were using profits from it to finance their journal.<sup>1</sup>

Verro was assisted by Camillo Cianfarra, Dino Rondani

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<sup>1</sup>Verro to Kuhn February 16 1897 S.L.P. Papers Box 14/4,  
Cianfarra to Kuhn May 1st 1897 S.L.P. Papers Box 26/2 -  
S.L.P. Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison.



and a handful of political emigrés from the textile towns of northern Italy. Most were veterans of the Italian leagues of resistance. Cianfarra, a Roman and experienced journalist, was a former correspondent of the New York Times, and Rondani was a lawyer long associated with labor and the Italian Socialists.<sup>1</sup> Their work was confined to propaganda, and their orientation always across the Atlantic towards Italy. Although some were active in local textile strikes, they expended the bulk of their energy on exposing oppression in their homeland, raising funds for political prisoners, and combatting the vitriol of fellow Italian anarchists in Paterson.<sup>2</sup> By the end of the decade the local branch of the S.L.P. was disbanded. Verro and Rondani returned to Italy, Il Proletario was bankrupt and moved to New York, under the editorship of Cianfarra.<sup>3</sup> Significantly the eclipse of these socialists signalled the ascendancy of the anarchist movement amongst Paterson's Italian millhands.

Paterson attracted almost every leading Italian anarchist during the latter half of the 1890s. By the turn of the century the city was popularly described as the center of the Italian anarchist movement.<sup>4</sup> Errico Malatesta, Saveiro Merlino,

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<sup>1</sup>A.M. Martellone Una Little Italy Nell' Atene D'America: La Comunità Italiana di Boston dal 1880 al 1920 (Napoli, 1973) pp.151-157, La Parola del Popolo Cinquantisimo Anniversario IX December 1958-January 1959 pp.136-138, La Questione Sociale December 15 1896.

<sup>2</sup>La Parola del Popolo pp.136-138, Altarelli "History of the Italian Colony of Paterson N.J." pp.6-7, Cianfarra to Kuhn June 9 1898 Box 21/2, Ferri to Kuhn November 23 1898 Box 23/8 S.L.P. Papers.

<sup>3</sup>Cianfarra to Kuhn August 24 1898 and September 21 1898 Box 22/7 S.L.P. Papers, La Parola del Popolo pp.138-140.

<sup>4</sup>F.H. Nichols "The Anarchists in America" Outlook 68 August 10 1901 pp.859-863; Woodcock Anarchism pp.345-351.

Giuseppe Ciancabilla, Pietro Gori, Luigi Galleani, all came to the city to work on La Questione Sociale. They were joined by Pedro Esteve, a Spanish anarchist soon to assume a prominent role amongst them. Meeting regularly in a saloon on Straight Street, their activities were felt principally in their homeland to which their journal was directed, and amongst the other radical groups seeking recruits amongst the city's Italians. Until Bresci's desperate act they scarcely merited attention. Armed with the grandiose title "Il Gruppo Diritto All'Esistenza" - The Group With the Right to Existence - they devoted their resources to publishing their journal and a score of anarchist pamphlets. Discussion groups and lectures were arranged, dances and picnics organized. For a time an anarchist theater group staged productions.<sup>1</sup> Much energy was expended in ideological rivalries both with Italian socialists in the city, and within the group itself. Malatesta, who edited La Questione Sociale during 1898 and 1899 entered into a strained dispute with Ciancabilla which resulted in the latter moving to West Hoboken to establish his own following and rival journal, L'Aurora. A subsequent attempt on Malatesta's life suggests the depth of emotion these disputes could provoke.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>La Questione Sociale September 30 1895, August 15 1896, October 15, November 15 1896. Ferraris "L'Assassino" pp.49, 52.

<sup>2</sup>A. Borghi Errico Malatesta (Milano, n.d.) pp.128-138, M. Nettelau Errico Malatesta (New York, n.d.) pp.255-256, U. Fedeli Giuseppe Giancabilla (Imola, 1965) pp.38-53, Altarelli "History of the Italian Colony of Paterson N.J." pp.6-8.



Scarcely the same energy characterized efforts to organize Italian textile hands. During 1897 "una lega di resistenza" was formed, with Esteve preaching "necessita della organizzazione operaia", during strikes in the mills.<sup>1</sup> As with most silkworkers' organizations "la lega" appears to have disappeared with the termination of the disputes. If it survived only a nucleus of committed activists could be numbered. Certainly "la lega" created no undue concern amongst Paterson's millowners.

With the assassination of King Humbert Paterson's anarchist community was catapulted into public view. Immediately federal secret service agents and Italian government spies descended on the city as fantastic stories of plots and conspiracies in Paterson and all over New Jersey proliferated. The radicals' flagrant disregard of public outrage at the murder scandalized newspaper readers throughout America. "Girl anarchist proud of Bresci" a New York World headline proclaimed - "Queen of Paterson 'Reds' Calls Him a Martyr and Says All Kings and Oppressors Should Be Killed As Was Humbert". Although claiming no prior knowledge of the assassins' intentions anarchist spokesmen stoutly refused to condemn Bresci. Only when newspapermen questioned whether President McKinley deserved a similar fate did they balk. Nevertheless rumors

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<sup>1</sup> La Q. Sociale June 30, July 30, August 15, and November 15 1897.



of a presidential assassination circulated.<sup>1</sup> Fear of alien subversives which had previously gripped only the city's silk manufacturers now assumed proportions hitherto unknown.

Local papers and city authorities took, or at least articulated a more level-headed view of Paterson's Italians. Until Bresci's thunderbolt they were only dimly aware of the impassioned politics of the Italian colony. They had even less reason, and probably inclination, to interfere with the Italian community. Contempt for Italians, after all, bred disgust and the desire to maintain a respectable distance from the colony. Local politicians and police officers asserted their ignorance of anarchist plots. Moreover they strenuously denied the irresponsible, and often unfounded, claims of the New York press. Some no doubt feared that vengeance directed against the city's Italians might lead to more odious repercussions. The city authorities wished to dispel the hysteria surrounding Paterson. The city was only slowly recovering from economic depression during the preceding decade. Its iron and locomotive industry had been decimated, and the silk industry had not escaped worrying setbacks. Unruly strikers, industrial upheaval and an exodus of mill owners already composed a sorry picture. Paterson simply couldn't afford further troubles. "Red City", a haven for foreign radicals

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<sup>1</sup>Newark Evening News August 4 1900, New York Times August 3 1900, Paterson Evening News August 2 1900, New York World clipping in Labadie Collection. Ferraris "L'Assassino" pp.61-62.

in which law and order was maintained only at the behest of subversive "secret societies", was hardly the reputation savored by local boosters. Further notoriety might bring complete commercial stagnation.

Paterson's Italians were "model neighbours and painstaking citizens with a wide and careful outlook for the future of their children and for the good of the whole town", the Paterson Evening News announced. This view was reiterated by Paterson's city government. "Beyond a few strikes", Mayor Hinchcliffe proclaimed, "we have had no particular trouble with the five thousand Italians who live in the city".<sup>1</sup> A public service in commemoration of the deceased monarch and attended by over a thousand of the city's Italians seemed to support the mayor's assessment. The congregated were "the better class of Italian resident", a local journal noted, and clearly hostile to the anarchist element seen to have "laughed derisively" outside the church.<sup>2</sup> The Paterson press were anxious to diminish the apparent influence of the anarchists on the city's Italians by picturing them as a minority of desperate radicals shunned by the vast bulk of their countrymen. Significantly the characterization of the anarchists by Paterson's ruling elite reflected familiar ethnic stereotypes that had long been in vogue amongst nativists, and which could

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Evening News July 31 and August 1 1900.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Evening News August 10 and 13 1900.

be easily extended to embrace the entire Italian community. The anarchists are "...an absolute danger to the lives of the people of this community", the press bellowed, "...a murderous and bloody" collection of "Stiletto carriers and blood loving swarthy devils".<sup>1</sup> Events during the next two years would provide the excuse for stigmatizing the whole Italian community as such.

In the summer of 1901 President McKinley was assassinated by an anarchist in Buffalo, New York. Paterson's Italian anarchists were an obvious and immediate object of suspicion as a wave of anti-radical sentiment swept the nation. The New Jersey legislature rushed through an anti-anarchist statute, making "the advocacy of hostility or opposition to any and all government", punishable by up to fifteen years imprisonment. It gave the city authorities leave to harass and suppress radical gatherings in the city, and contributed to a growing swell of anti-Italian sentiment.<sup>2</sup>

The presidential assassination acted as a catalyst on the worst fears of Paterson's administrators. In the year between the slaying of King Humbert and McKinley's death, opposition to the city's Italians does not appear to have

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<sup>1</sup>ibid. July 31 1900.

<sup>2</sup>S. Fine "Anarchism and the Assassination of McKinley" American Historical Review LX July 1955 pp.777-799, Free Society November 11 1902, January 24 1904, March 27 1904, Wm. Preston Jr. Aliens and Dissenters; Federal Suppression of Radicals 1903-1933 (Harvard, 1963) pp.30-34.



intensified appreciably despite a charged industrial situation in Paterson. In the early months of 1901 strikes and attendant disorders broke out throughout the silk industry, principally in the ribbon trade. Although Italians were prominent strikers in Paterson they were joined by weavers of all nationalities and consequently not singled out for special attention. To be sure millowners attempted to use nativist prejudices to their own advantage, but they were largely unsuccessful.

"So many of our former weavers are American-born men and women", a manufacturer uttered in mock incredulity, "...and that these should support a movement so un-American in spirit must be due to the fact that they have been hoodwinked as to the real cause of their leaving their work".<sup>1</sup> In seeking defectors from the ranks of strikers he was wasting his breath. Italians did not feature as strike leaders, nor could they reasonably be accused of "hoodwinking" their fellow workers. The anarchist community maintained a notably low profile throughout the turmoil.

To work against strikers' interests, blind prejudice needed more to feed on than the vagaries of a millowner's tortured imagination. On the contrary the strike was conducted in the pattern traditional in Paterson. Its conduct moreover indicated the extent to which anti-Italian feeling was submerged beneath the much clearer class concerns of the

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<sup>1</sup> NJBS Twenty Fourth Annual Report 1901 p.443.

city's workers. When millowners obtained a court injunction restraining disorderly strikers a number of Italians were arrested. Immediately silkworkers rallied to their defense, lobbying city authorities to restrain police from implementing the directive. The Paterson Board of Aldermen responded by passing a city ordinance permitting picketing. Moreover William Hughes, attorney for the arrested strikers, was subsequently elected to the state assembly the following year, largely on the strength of his spirited defense of the silkworkers.<sup>1</sup> Both instances suggest class rather than ethnic considerations were to the fore during the dispute and its immediate aftermath, despite the prominence of Italians on the picket lines and in the court dock. The increasing number of new immigrants in the silk industry had not yet eroded the traditional power of the city's millhands.

McKinley's killing took place towards the end of the 1901 strike, and the resulting "Red Scare" was not without effect in shifting the allegiances of millworkers. Sensational accounts of Paterson's anarchists made good copy in the national journals. Although one report indicated that local radicals "...had little in common with the rest of the Italian population in Paterson", most were less discerning. Typical of

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<sup>1</sup> ibid. pp.444-450, National Labor Standard June 27, August 8 and November 8 1902, Nelson and Shriner History of Paterson III pp.348-349.

the macabre excesses struck by the majority was a report in the Outlook magazine in August 1901. "This club of assassins", it ran, "appears to us even more gruesome than the 'suicide club' which Robert Louis Stevenson's imagination created".<sup>1</sup> If the writer's imagination appeared no less creative than Stevenson's his concerns were more commonplace.

This rampant national hysteria left sour traces on relations between English-speaking workers and Italians in Paterson's factories. Following King Humbert's death demands for the firing of Italian weavers had been bandied about, and an unfortunate few had suffered.<sup>2</sup> Now the call was revived, by English-speaking workers. The loomfixers union, a small but influential body in the local trades assembly, initiated the forming of a committee to protest against the employment of "...alleged anarchists in a local mill". One of its members complained that "...while he was working he saw many Italian workers wearing Bresci buttons inside their coats".<sup>3</sup>

Deteriorating relations between Italians and English-speaking workers were fully revealed in the dyehouse strike of 1902. This was the first industrial dispute in the city that was identifiably Italian. Italians had quickly replaced older groups of Dutch, Germans and Irish as helpers to skilled

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<sup>1</sup>Outlook 68 August 10 1901 pp.860, 844.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times August 4 1900.

<sup>3</sup>American Silk Journal December 1901.



dyers, and by 1902 formed the bulk of the workforce. Initially the strike - for higher wages - appeared little different from many before. There were the usual disorders, attacks on blacklegs, stoning of mills and skirmishes with the police, but apart from a few uneasy days during April when police officers had exchanged gunfire with strikers, the dispute was unremarkable.<sup>1</sup> Dyeshop owners tried to use anti-Italian nativism to win public support for their position. They condemned the "lawless and outrageous" behaviour of the helpers, who, they characterized as men of "...much less intelligence and character than the dyers, and also much more turbulent. They are largely Italians, and almost exclusively foreigners".<sup>2</sup> Even so not until June 1902, when the dispute assumed new proportions, did the owners' claims win much support.

In that month the helpers went on a wild rampage throughout Paterson's mill districts, wrecking mills and machinery, savagely beating both blacklegs and police officers. The riot followed a mass meeting addressed by Luigi Galleani and other anarchist spokesmen, both Italian and English-speaking. Anarchists had acted as spokesmen for the dyeworkers throughout the dispute. Johann Most, William MacQueen an English anarchist, and Rudolf Grossmann, of Austrian origin, had all travelled regularly to the city from New York to address

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian April 22 and 23 1902, New York Times April 23, 24 and 26 1902.

<sup>2</sup>American Silk Journal May 1902.

strike meetings.<sup>1</sup> The local anarchist group performed a similar function. Although the English-speaking workers were represented during the strike by James McGrath, organizer of the dyeworkers' union, their inability to settle the dispute led to the anarchists assuming increasing prominence as strike leaders. What precisely prompted the riot was never established. MacQueen, McGrath and Galleani all spoke at a mass meeting of strikers, before the assembled, with Galleani at their head, converged on the mills. Deaths followed as police exchanged gunfire with rioters. Mayor Hinchcliffe was forced to summon the state militia before order was restored.<sup>2</sup>

In the aftermath of the 1902 strike anti-Italian feeling reached fever pitch. The riot was presented as "remarkable" even "in (Paterson's) long career of lawless deeds". Moreover it was attributed almost wholly to the Italians and their anarchist leaders. "The elements which have made Paterson the center of Anarchism in this country seemed to have temporary control", one commentator noted. Galleani was pictured as the chief villain. "Mad Riot in the Streets of Paterson: Anarchist urged them on to Madness" ran the New York Times headline. "Many of the former companions of Bresci" were identified among the rioters. Inevitably it was Italians, rather than

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<sup>1</sup>Freiheit (New York) April 26 and June 14 1902.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times June 19 1902, American Silk Journal June 1902.



dyeworkers as such, who suffered most from the backlash following the strike.

The anarchist strike leaders were jailed or forced to flee the city as Hinchcliffe pledged to destroy the "anarchist element", a mission "...he would accomplish (even) if every Italian in town had to be driven out".<sup>1</sup> Apparently the anarchist minority amongst the city's Italians had become a majority. Whereas only a year before city authorities had cooperated with English-speaking workers in nullifying an injunction granted to the city's manufacturers, Paterson's mayor now linked arms with millowners in suppressing disorderly strikers. Whilst soldiers and private guards protected mill buildings, houses in the Italian section of town were "ransacked from cellar to attic" during police raids for arms or other incriminating evidence. Plainclothes detectives scoured the Straight Street district, center of anarchist activity, whilst others sought to infiltrate the dyeworkers union. Meetings of Italian millhands were broken up. A local printer of La Questione Sociale, the Italian radical journal, was prevented from publishing. The anarchists were subsequently forced to move their journal "underground" and publish secretly. Galleani, sought by the police, fled the city.<sup>2</sup>

The English-speaking workers' reaction to the strike and its suppression was equivocal. Whilst they condemned the

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<sup>1</sup> New York Times June 19, 23 1902, Freiheit June 28, July 5 1902, Outlook 71, June 28 1902 pp.522-523, A.W. Wishart The Case of William McQueen: Reasons Why He Should Be Liberated (Trenton, 1905) pp.3-14.

<sup>2</sup> New York Times June 24, 25, 27 and 29 1902.



presence of militia in the city, they were reluctant to present a united front with the Italian dyeworkers. James McGrath, mindful that the strike was still in progress and that mill-owners had established an important precedent in obtaining municipal support for resisting strikers, assailed the state troopers as "lazy loafers", content to lounge and smoke the day long, and "a disgrace to the police force". There were fears that the whole silk workforce would refuse to work under armed protection, as workers claimed "it makes them feel as if they were 'scabs'". But if traditional hostility to mill-owners and militia died hard, opposition to Italians was equally vociferous. McGrath, who was "in tears" at news of the riot, remained indignantly aloof from the Italian strikers. His attitude was made plain at a strike meeting following the disorders, when a rioter, identified by a detective in the audience, was hauled away to police headquarters. The crowd jeered the police, but McGrath quietened them in an instant: "Sit down and act like men", he admonished. "If he is wanted for doing any rioting he deserves to be arrested for the demonstration was a disgrace". The English-speaking dyeworkers split from the Italians, and at subsequent meetings of silk-workers the city's weavers refused to call a general walkout from the mills in support of the dyeworkers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times June 19, 20, 23, 25 and 27 1902.

The events of 1902 composed a sad picture and marked the increasing alienation of Italian silkwormers from both their English-speaking brethren and traditional supporters of the city's millhands. As Italian newcomers continued to fill Paterson's factories during the ensuing decade the rift deepened. Harassment of the Italian radical community continued. Millowners saw the advantage of a "red scare" which could be used in disciplining and checking the demands of unruly workers. City administrators and business leaders anxious to demonstrate Paterson's attractiveness as a commercial location, resolved to root out the evil in their midst. Intensified policing of the city's Italian neighborhoods was one result. In 1906 rumors that Paterson's anarchists were again involved in an assassination plot against King Victor Emmanuel of Italy brought secret servicemen to the city and a well publicized investigation by Police Chief Bimson.<sup>1</sup> More demonstrative was the hounding of Italian radicals and the suppression of La Question Sociale.<sup>2</sup> "The fair name of the city", had been brought into serious question by the anarchist

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Evening News November 14, 15 1906.

<sup>2</sup>The suppression of the journal was probably connected with the surveillance of anarchist groups carried out by the Immigration Bureau, the Secret Service and local police forces in 1908. See Preston Aliens and Dissenters p.33.

publication, Paterson's Mayor McBride explained in justifying his decision, a matter which has "...been the cause of great financial loss to this City and deep mortification and regret to its citizens". The Mayor contended that:

"Statistics prove this city to be one of the most orderly in the world...crimes which would not have been noticed in other places were magnified when they occurred in Paterson, and the world held its hands up in horror at the tales of our wickedness which were told....

With the aid of the President of the United States and the National Government the newspaper was suppressed, anarchistic meetings dispersed by a quiet word from the man in blue with a night-stick in his belt, and the worst of the group driven from our City....

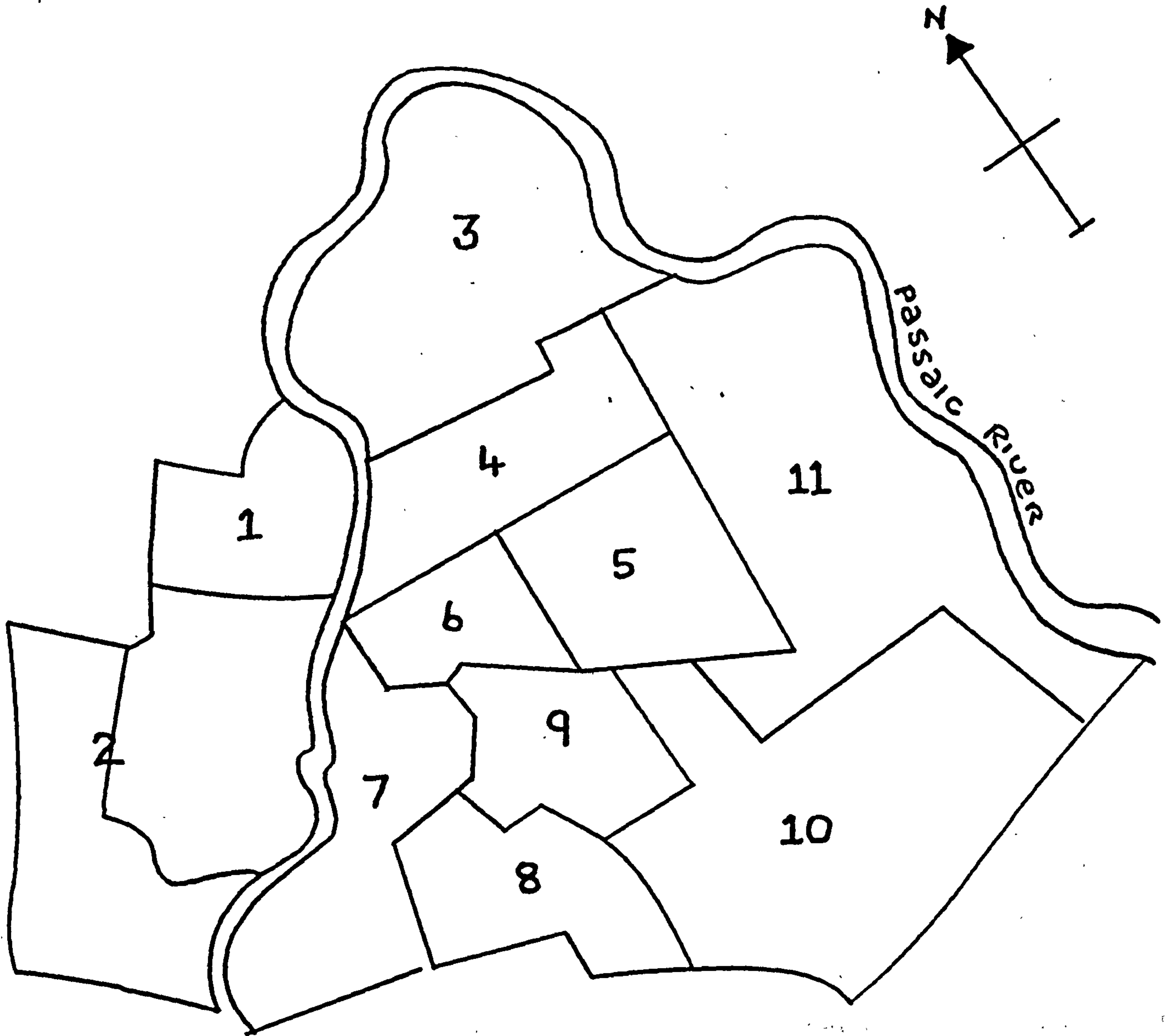
This is Paterson's answer to the cruel slanders which have so grievously hurt and injured her". 1

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<sup>1</sup>Annual Report of the City Officers 1907-1908 pp.41-44,  
L. Gaminita Free Country (Paterson, n.d.) pp.21-29,  
Paterson Daily Guardian February 28 1912.



Municipal Wards in Paterson 1905-1915



1000' 2000'

Scale

Paterson, N. J. Municipal Wards 1905-1915. City of Paterson, N. J. Department of Public Works. 1915.

## Chapter Six

### THE POLITICS OF MUNICIPAL REFORM

The structure of local government in many American cities pre-dated their emergence as large-scale industrial and urban centres. Paterson was no exception. Granted a city charter in the 1850s, its machinery of government was comprised essentially of an executive in the person of mayor who represented the city at large and a board of aldermen directly elected from several wards. Ultimate responsibility for both the long term development and day-to-day functioning of the city was their combined task. The mayor and aldermen were overseers of taxation, education, public health and essential services. To them fell the task of appointing city officials to superintend the everyday business of the city - from tax assessors down to police officers and even alms-house assistants. Their duties were all-embracing and, with rapid urban and industrial expansion in the latter half of the nineteenth century, increasing.

A leading urban historian has characterized this particular form of government as reflecting the "decentralized" pattern of urban development in American industrializing cities.<sup>1</sup> Prior to industrialization cities were "pedestrian communities" in which the "geographical separation" of social groups and different classes "was not as sharp as it became in the late

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<sup>1</sup>S.P. Hays "The Changing Political Structure of the City in Industrial America" Journal of Urban History 1 November 1974 pp.6-38.

nineteenth century". Early city government reflected the "integrated community". City councils were generally elected at town meetings, and "invariably they were composed of men dominant in the community's social and economic life - bankers, commission merchants, lawyers".

With rapid industrialization and urbanization differentiation and decentralization in social and economic life emerged. Ethnic subcommunities replaced the integrated community. Heightened class and occupational divisions found their counterpart in increased social and residential segregation. Moreover a "decentralized political system" appeared in response to these social and economic realities. Each city sub-community demanded its own representation, and obtained it in the ward-elected alderman. Only the office of mayor survived as the expression of city-wide political life; and a mayor's room for manoeuvre was circumscribed by the, often, parochial interests of local aldermen. Embodying both the traditional concern with "checks and balances" and the dictum "no taxation without representation", it was a system true to the ideals of America's founding fathers. If cumbersome, and later to be condemned as inefficient and corrupt by urban reformers, the ward system had the virtue of making city government responsive to large sectors of the electorate.

Changes in the form of government altered the kinds of men elected as city fathers. Increasingly ward politicians reflected the ethnic and occupational backgrounds of their constituencies. As Samuel Hays noted; "By 1900, the typical



ward-elected city councilman was a small businessman-retailer, director of a funeral home, real estate promoter and contractor, director of a community bank - a clerk, a skilled artisan, or an unskilled laborer. Professional and large business classes were greatly outnumbered".<sup>1</sup> Although many of these local "pot house politicians" were products of a city "machine" and engaged in a variety of corrupt practices usually costly to their electors, they were, at the same time and of necessity, never far divorced from the interests of their communities. In the burgeoning industrial centres that mushroomed across 19th century America they proved wonderfully enduring.<sup>2</sup> Both the factory novice and the recently arrived immigrant found a spokesman and symbol in their local alderman, and frequently a means of easing the transition to a new way of life.

Not surprisingly it was men of this breed who emerged as officeholders in Paterson's city government during the final quarter of the nineteenth century. Despite the economic dominance of silk manufacturing in the city, millowners were sparsely represented at City Hall. Only one millowner occupied the mayoralty in the period 1867-1915.<sup>3</sup> John Ryle, English-

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.* p.14.

<sup>2</sup> For a recent account of machine politics and its demise under the impact of urban reform see Z.L. Miller Boss Cox's Cincinnati: Urban Politics in the Progressive Era (New York, 1968). Elsewhere however the machine and its supporters sometimes proved very adaptive and survived the progressive refashioning of city government. See D.D. McKean The Boss: The Hague Machine in Action (Boston, 1940). An even more remarkable, but certainly atypical, example was the Daley machine in Chicago. See M. Royko Boss: Richard J. Daley of Chicago (New York, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> Noble "The Relation of the Middle Classes" pp.75-85.

born and celebrated pioneer of the U.S. silk industry, headed the city government in the late 1860s. His term of office did not, however, herald an era of millowning mayors. Ryle was an exception. He had settled in Paterson long before the arrival of most millowners and the city's development as the nation's silk manufacturing centre. Moreover in the course of his career Ryle had become something of a celebrity, closely identified with the civic and commercial growth of Paterson.<sup>1</sup> No other silk manufacturer possessed a similar standing or popularity, and none equalled Ryle's political success. Paterson's mayors included lawyers, store-owners, brewers and manufacturers connected with the ailing iron industry. Whilst no silk worker headed the municipal government, many mayors had begun their careers that way, or in other manual occupations, including John Ryle. Benjamin Buckely, mayor from 1875-1878, was the closest silk interests came to the coveted chair of chief city custodian. Buckely ran a spindle-making concern in the city, supplying first the cotton industry and later silk mills with machinery.<sup>2</sup> But a host of leading millowners, including William Strange, Catholina Lambert and Jacob Weidmann never even got their names onto the ballot sheet.

Election to the board of aldermen proved no more attainable to millowners. Between 1871 and 1909 only three served as ward representatives. Typically, neighbourhood politicians were just what their description suggests: local storekeepers or community businessmen, skilled workers and unskilled factory

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1 Clayton and Nelson History of Bergen and Passaic Counties pp 465-468.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* pp.441.



hands.<sup>1</sup> Aldermen were often "machine" candidates, and also closely identified by their ethnic ties. They were elected with the official backing of their party's "bosses" and decked with the colours of the local ethnic community. After polls closed a successful candidate would be chaired through the streets of his neighborhood, proceeded by the regalia of a marching brass band. In the 7th and 8th wards it was Paterson's Irish Democrats who usually called the tune; in the 1st and 2nd wards Englishmen, Dutchmen and Germans acted in like fashion. But both the political and ethnic affiliations of ward voters were overlaid with class interests. A majority of the "Dubliners" in the 8th ward were iron and silkworkers, whose support for the city's Democratic machine depended upon a mutual recognition of their occupational interests. Thus could workingmen be elected to the board of aldermen. Even when not, the extent to which Paterson's wards were heavily dominated by working class electors, meant their influence was seldom ignored, at least on issues directly affecting their livelihoods.

The backgrounds and interests of successive city fathers indicate the problems silk manufacturers faced in their relations with city government. Repeatedly, during strikes, city governors rebuffed millowners' demands for official support for their cause. Instead both mayors and aldermen maintained a strict neutrality during industrial disputes, knowing full well

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<sup>1</sup>R.A. Noble "Relation of the Middle Classes" pp.101-103.



that short of police protection and municipal sanction silk manufacturers were powerless to effectively combat strikers. Similarly millowners discovered the attitude of city officers to be equally unfavourable to their longer term interests. Millowners complained vigorously and persistently at the lack of municipal inducement to invest in new plant and machinery. City taxes on industrial machinery and mill buildings discouraged industrial expansion. Moreover municipal revenues were not spent on improving the city as an industrial location, but used instead to support the corrupt dealings of local politicians. Elsewhere millowners could expect local governments that were responsive to their welfare, providing low interest loans, attractive sites for new mills and exemptions from taxation. Short of municipal commitment to their aims, many silk manufacturers found the advantages of re-location too attractive to pass up.

The immediate effects of the millowners' exodus on Paterson's city government in the 1880s and 1890s were not dramatic. For one thing, its full significance was masked by the continued expansion of the local silk industry and, with it, the city as a whole. Moreover in the propaganda war between local promoters and migrating manufacturers, reports of problems in the silk annexes led some to suggest that Paterson's industrial pre-eminence was not seriously threatened. Probably more important was the lack of common interest between millowners and city officials. Storekeepers, real estate agents and the like - typical Paterson aldermen - did not share silk

manufacturers' grievances against the city's tax load or against its troublesome workforce. They only appreciated that a shift in taxation from millowners would increase their own burden. Nor were they susceptible to scaremongering directed at unruly millhands. Many had intimate connections in the city's working class neighbourhoods; were dependent upon millhands' earnings for their own livelihoods; and often proved valuable supporters to strikers during periods of industrial strife. They recognized workers' passions to be directed almost exclusively against their employers. Attacks on property and persons during strikes were confined to mills and blacklegs. It was seldom any third party suffered. Moreover the penalty for city officials who ignored workers' interests was political boycott. The structure of local government placed the city's politicians in a position of popular accessibility, and with it responsibilities to their constituents which they could not easily shirk.

In the quarter century before America's entry into the First World War the movement for political reform transformed the structure and personnel of government in many American states and cities. Popularized as the "progressive" movement, it reached its fullest expression in the national Progressive Party, founded and led by Theodore Roosevelt in the 1912 presidential election. Although the Bull Moosers were defeated at the polls, and as a recognizable party scarcely survived the decade, at the state and local level they had already achieved notable success prior to Roosevelt's candidacy.

Although political reform was a prominent cause amongst progressives, their attention embraced a spectrum of economic and social evils, and included a stricter regulation and humanization of industrial and civic relations.<sup>1</sup> Municipal re-organization was from the outset subsumed in this much broader vision of reform.

"Middle class" and "old-stock" was the characterization of the typical progressive offered by Richard Hofstadter in the 1950s, in a widely-read analysis of the reform impulse.<sup>2</sup> Hofstadter claimed the "movement" obtained much support from middle-class intellectuals and professionals. Their concern with political and social abuses was motivated by their declining status in the maturing industrial economy of the late 19th century. Such men were for the most part old-stock Protestants, adherents to the ancient American ideals expressed in Jacksonian democracy. In a society increasingly dominated by big business, organized labor and political machines they felt dismayed and helpless. The "progressive movement" reflected their intent to both correct the abuses of industrial America and to return government to its "true" state of republican democracy. Reform of these dimensions required more active and direct intervention by the state in the everyday functioning of American society. It resulted in a vast body of "progressive" legislation, the growth of state regulatory

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<sup>1</sup>G. Mowry The California Progressives (Berkeley 1951) and The Era of Theodore Roosevelt (New York, 1958).

<sup>2</sup>R. Hostadter The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. (New York, 1955) partic. pps. 131-271.



agencies, and marked the transformation from "laissez-faire" to "corporate" capitalism in America.

Recent historians of the Progressive era have raised important correctives to the "status" interpretation of Hofstadter. Samuel Hays has pictured reform as reflecting the "integrative tendencies" inherent in urban development from 1900 onwards.<sup>1</sup> Whereas in the early nineteenth century "production technologies" which "substituted machines for manual labor" had given rise to the decentralized city and its characteristic working class neighbourhoods, now new "organizational technologies" predominated and "dramatically increased the speed and flexibility of human contacts". The telephone, new modes of transport and expanded, specialized management activities all required and made possible larger units of administration. City-wide organization replaced localized, neighbourhood groupings. Characteristic community units - the local school board, neighbourhood political clubs, retail outlets, commercial houses and professional elites - were replaced by city-wide institutions and elites. Administrators, businessmen and their clienteles expanded and united. Centralized and specialized units usurped the functions of localized institutions. The "...new political order arose to limit the variety of (localized) claims, to channel them into fewer centres of decision-making, and to integrate more

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<sup>1</sup>S.P. Hays "The Changing Political Structure" pp.16-25, and also Hays Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency (Cambridge, 1959).

activities into a relatively small number of systems of human relationships". For Hays the impetus behind progressive reform arose not from a disenchanted, status conscious middle-class but from businessmen, professionals, such as education-  
alists and health experts, and the "urban upper class", all with a vested interest in city-wide units of administration. This "urban upper class", which had dominated political life in pre-industrial cities, now re-emerged, because "...by the early twentieth century they had learned new methods of integrative control from their experience with corporate systems". Progressive reform of city government "marked the re-entrance into political life of members of the upper class after several decades of relative absence".<sup>1</sup>

Hays' interest in the influence of technological change and business leadership upon progressive reform featured strongly in James Weinstein's and Gabriel Kolko's revisions of the "status" explanation.<sup>2</sup> Both have dwelt upon the transformation of the U.S. economy from laissez-faire to corporate capitalism. They have focused upon measures sponsored and supported by business interests to regulate economic and social life. Such regulation, they contend, was designed to both increase the control of corporate interests whilst at the same time disarming critics of the capitalist system. They reach

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<sup>1</sup> ibid. pp.16, 24. See also the two important studies by R.H. Wiebe Businessmen and Reform: A Study of the Progressive Movement (Harvard, 1962) and The Search for Order 1877-1920 (New York, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> J. Weinstein The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State 1900-1918 (Boston, 1968), G. Kolko The Triumph of Conservatism (New York, 1963).



similar conclusions that, in the words of Weinstein, ".... liberalism in the Progressive Era was the product, consciously created, of the leaders of giant corporations and financial institutions that emerged astride American society in the last years of the nineteenth century...."<sup>1</sup>

Other historians of the Progressive Era, attracted less by corporate involvement in legislative programmes, have attacked Hofstadter's emphasis upon the old-stock and middle class origins of reform and reformers.<sup>2</sup> They have demonstrated that, in many urban centres, progressives reflected the industrial and immigrant backgrounds of their constituents. It was not uncommon for urban politicians, with workingmen's support and often themselves of lower class origins, to sponsor and support reform measures. Indeed these urban progressives were more often than not machine politicians. They contributed to the reform movement a lower class dimension and impetus hitherto overlooked.

That such widely divergent interpretations of the Progressive Era should arise need surprise no-one for this reform movement of the early 20th century was no less amorphous than others of its kind. Under the umbrella of "reform" the movement attracted a variety of supporters, each with their own

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<sup>1</sup>Weinstein Corporate Ideal p.xv.

<sup>2</sup>J.J. Huthmacher "Urban Liberalism and the Age of Reform" Mississippi Valley Historical Review LXIX September 1962 pp.231-241, J.D. Buenker Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform (New York, 1973).



particularist concerns, and not all necessarily sharing common goals. The very success of "progressive liberalism" doubtlessly depended upon its ability to accommodate divergent interests. Only then could it obtain the mass support necessary for its varied aims.

New Jersey was an important centre of Progressive reform. Exposed by "muckrakers" as "home" of the trusts, with its legislature pictured in the pockets of corporation magnates, the state received inordinate attention from reformers. Moreover a highly urbanized and industrialized region, it appeared ripe for progressive renewal. The New Jersey progressives engineered several sweeping successes in the first decade of the new century. A comprehensive code of labor and welfare legislation was introduced, and with a few exceptions successfully guided through the state legislature. Anti-trust measures, outlawing the grosser malpractices of corporation businessmen and bringing public utilities under government supervision, were passed. Corrupt election practices were prohibited, the direct election of Senators introduced along with civil service reform and the direct primary.<sup>1</sup>

Guided by reform Governor Woodrow Wilson and George Record, a Yankee from Maine, New Jersey progressivism seemed to comply with the national characterization provided by Hofstadter.

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<sup>1</sup>R.E. Noble New Jersey Progressivism Before Wilson (Princeton, 1946) passim, J.D. Buenker "Urban, New-Stock Liberalism and Progressive Reform in New Jersey" New Jersey History LXXXVII Summer 1969 pp.79-104.

Its earliest historian certainly agreed that its motive power was provided by middle class concerns and supporters.<sup>1</sup> More recently this view has been challenged. Much of the leadership and support for progressive measures came from machine politicians of immigrant and Catholic backgrounds. Joe Tumulty, raised in the Irish working class streets of Jersey City, rose via the city machine to become Wilson's private secretary, and a dogged fighter for reform.<sup>2</sup> Cornelius Ford, president of the State Federation of Labor, James Blauvelt and Henry Marelli labor lawyers from Paterson, William Hughes an Irish labor lawyer and former millhand in Paterson, were equally important figures. They joined arms with progressives from Newark and Jersey City and gave the movement a solidly working class, "new stock" base.<sup>3</sup> Their concerns and backgrounds are reflected in the labor and welfare measures adopted in the New Jersey statute-book. The regulation of factory hours, lunch breaks, lighting and ventilation, industrial accidents, convict labor and the employment of women and children, composed an important list of advances for New Jersey's industrial toilers.

Men such as Ford and Hughes were heirs to the mantle borne twenty years earlier by J.P. McDonnell and his supporters in

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<sup>1</sup>Noble New Jersey Progressivism.

<sup>2</sup>J.M. Blum Joe Tumulty and the Wilson Era (Yale, 1969 ed.) pp.1-19.

<sup>3</sup>R.J. Vecoli The People of New Jersey (Princeton, 1965) pp. 168-172; Buenker "Urban, New-Stock Liberalism" pp. 81-84.



the Trenton legislative chamber.<sup>1</sup> The labor and welfare measures they ushered in were neither the amelioration of a middle class or a corporate elite, designed to pacify and "incorporate" disenchanted factory hands. Instead they reflected a much longer tradition of lower class activism and self-help. If McDonnell's earlier work revises the contention of a recent historian that progressive "...legislation designed to promote the security and welfare of the state's disadvantaged citizens was clearly unsurpassed", lower class influence on New Jersey reform was clearly important.<sup>2</sup>

At the local level the impetus for reform in New Jersey shared similar lower class dimensions, at least in the industrialized, northern counties of the state. Paterson, an important centre for "New Idea" Republican progressives and the home of Democrat liberals, such as William Hughes, mirrored the various strains of the state-wide movement. It spawned a number of legislative representatives who took up the cause of reform; and more often than not measures explicitly framed to benefit their working class constituents. Hughes and James Blauvelt, the lawyers who had defended silk strikers during the 1901 injunction cases in the city, both took up workingmen's interests; Hughes in the House of Representatives and later the U.S. Senate, Blauvelt in the State Assembly.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> McDonnell and Hughes were close friends in fact, Hughes receiving the endorsement of the National Labor Standard in his electoral campaigns. See National Labor Standard November 8 1902, October 3 1904.

<sup>2</sup> Buenker "Urban, New-Stock Liberalism" p.95.

<sup>3</sup> Legislature of N.J. 1913 p.304, Legislature of N.J. 1909 p. 362.



Blauvelt successfully introduced a bill providing compensation for victims of industrial accidents. He also worked to prevent employers' future access to strike injunctions. With the support of Hughes, the State Federation of Labor and Samuel Gompers, Blauvelt furnished a bill to limit the power of chancery courts to punish violations of injunctions. It was unsuccessful, but indicative of his sympathies and support.<sup>1</sup> Henry Marelli, former silk worker, immigrant community spokesman and counsel to Italian strikers in 1913, was another Paterson "New-Idea" progressive elected to the state assembly in 1904. Even some not elected on specifically "progressive" tickets advanced labor and welfare measures included under the general title of progressive reform. Tom McCran, a Paterson Republican, introduced measures guaranteeing minimum wages for workers on public works projects. Tom Layden, a local machinist, pressed the state assembly to adopt old-age insurance.<sup>2</sup> None of these men can be easily identified as status-conscious Yankees or corporate leaders. Nevertheless, they represented an important dimension of the reform movement both locally and state-wide. Their careers suggest that the impulse for reform was rooted as much in the class concerns of industrial workers as in the manipulative designs of others.

Labor and welfare legislation was not, however, the sole

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<sup>1</sup>Buenker "Urban, New-Stock Liberalism" p.95, Noble New Jersey Progressivism pp. 127-129.

<sup>2</sup>Buenker "Urban, New-Stock Liberalism" pp.92-93, Legislature of N.J. 1905 p.328, Legislature of N.J. 1910 pp.357-358, Legislature of N.J. 1904 pp.308-309.

or even main thrust behind progressive reform. Regulation of public utilities and monopolies, democratization of the electoral process and, most importantly in urban centres, the reform and re-organization of municipal government all received more publicity and attention. Behind such measures business interests and workingmen joined forces. In localized settings the former may have had little in common with working class activists, but all shared a common vocabulary and traded upon a common, if diffuse, desire for "progressive" change. In such an atmosphere the conflicting interests of businessmen and workers continued to exist, but were blunted. On the face of it workers stood to gain by the rooting out of political and economic malpractice, from civil service reform, the regulation of public utilities and a range of other reform measures. In practice however the advantages were less obvious. The snuffing out of corruption would, in principle, shatter the urban political machine. Civil service reform aimed to deprive urban bosses of a major source of dispensation by which recruits were won and supporters rewarded. The direct primary would usurp the internal discipline of the machine. Neither measure could have endeared progressivism to workingmen. The prospect of a "safe job" on the fire or police service now appeared a distant horizon. The machine had traditionally put up candidates sympathetic to lower class interests. When it had not, demonstrative lobbying by workingmen usually rectified any misunderstanding. Would the direct primary ensure political parties were any more responsive to lower class voters?



Above all, the reform of municipal government - usually in the form of appointive commissions under the nominal jurisdiction of an elected mayor replacing the old aldermanic system - sounded not only the death knell over the political machine, but threatened to remove all public officials, but one, from popular accountability. It was reform fraught with dire consequences for workingmen reliant upon municipal allies. The "progressive" orchestra which played the virtues of "returning government to the people" must have struck a hollow note amongst urban wage-earners.

Opposition from machine politicians to "good government" measures introduced in the state legislature was strenuous. A recent study has shown that some younger machine representatives, recognizing the need to "adjust to these new realities or cease to be viable", supported political and municipal reform.<sup>1</sup> Thus measures such as the direct election of senators or corrupt practices legislation received their endorsement. Most, however, sought to defeat or emasculate reform proposals. Civil service reform was defeated and a direct primary law only narrowly passed. Proposals to implement the commission form of government in New Jersey cities in 1911 met considerable opposition from this same urban contingent. They amended the original bill and stalled its passage so effectively that only the intervention of Governor Wilson assured its passage. Even then the law was so compromised that the adoption of city commissions was far from assured.

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<sup>1</sup>Buenker "Urban, New-Stock Liberalism" pp.98-103.



In 1907 Paterson's municipal government was converted to commission rule. The revised city charter adopted in that year reflected a similar struggle to that existing at the state level between "bossism" and reformers. Nonetheless its enactment in Paterson differed significantly from the wider struggle. Commission rule came to Paterson four years prior to the passage of similar legislation governing all New Jersey cities. It derived from state legislation specifically designed to amend government in New Jersey's medium-sized cities.<sup>1</sup> The reform was proposed by a Paterson representative, Senator John Hinchcliffe, a former city mayor. His bill was limited and particular in scope. It excluded the state's largest urban centres, where opposition to municipal reform was likely strongest and most effective. Proposed late in the legislative session, the bill's passage was orderly and unceremonious. Scarcely anyone seemed to pay it much attention.

Hinchcliffe's shrewd framing and presentation of his reform bill doubtlessly assisted its passage. But political engineering in Trenton's legislative halls should not obscure the fact that Hinchcliffe and local supporters of commission government had fought a much longer and harder tussle to win community support for the measure. Why they were successful remains obscure. Machine politicians in the state's largest

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Guardian April 7 1906, April 9 1907.

cities defeated proposals for municipal reform. Their resistance was only broken by the combined action of reformers throughout the state in 1911. Even in lesser New Jersey cities, such as Camden and Passaic, opposition to commission government was fierce. When a bill, proposing municipal commissions, was introduced in the 1906 legislative session by Paterson representative, George Wright, it was successfully undermined by amendments from Camden and Passaic politicians.<sup>1</sup> Paterson reformers remained unusual in both the initiation and espousal of their cause, and in their success. Their atypicality suggests the origins and impetus for municipal reform in Paterson differed significantly from that of other New Jersey cities.

What made Paterson ripe for reform in the first decade of the twentieth century? Were its municipal problems significantly worse than those in other Eastern cities? Or its city officials any more susceptible to "boodle" than those elsewhere? Why did progressives in Paterson achieve a degree of power and influence over one specific aspect of reform - municipal re-organization - that was not evident in other New Jersey cities? Further research would be required to effectively answer these questions. In particular, attention might focus upon the relations between local and state supporters of commission government, the funding of reform organisations and a biographical analysis of their membership. Despite

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<sup>1</sup>The Paterson Guardian April 9 and 12 1906. The bill when passed established city commissions appointed by the Board of Aldermen, a system of government hardly different from that extant.

these limitations the general contours of the local movement for commission rule can be sketched in. Above all, the effects of commission government upon local political and social relations can be delineated.

Certainly the call for city commissions had echoed in Paterson for many years. It increased as the New Jersey reform movement gathered momentum and cities throughout the U.S. adopted various designs for municipal re-organization. Moreover to the extent that progressive reform in Paterson, and in New Jersey in general, was identified with measures explicitly designed to benefit urban workingmen, commission rule became part of a grand design for urban renewal and reform. None of these features marked Paterson apart from other New Jersey cities however. A broader analysis, taking into account particular economic and social tensions within the city, is required. For what gave Paterson its unique quality was its dependence upon the silk industry; and the city's urban problems derived essentially from this dependence. By the opening years of the new century the troubles of silk manufacturers reverberated throughout Paterson. The exodus of millowners threatened not only city finances but the whole commercial future of Paterson. The traditional scepticism of city fathers towards manufacturers' carping now conflicted with the need to counter the lurid image of "Red City" and to attract capital to Paterson. Slowly but surely millowners' problems became identified with those of the city at large. Ultimately the changing character of Paterson's



textile hands tipped the balance in favour of millowners' interests. Italian millworkers were not only intimately associated with the city's degraded reputation, they also lacked sufficient political influence within the city to effectively combat opposition to them as both immigrants and silkworkers.

As early as 1892 Paterson's government had experimented with city commissions. In that year Senator John Hinchcliffe campaigned for a Police and Fire Commission to supervise these essential services in the city. A Police Justice bill was subsequently passed, creating a bi-partisan commission of four, appointed by Paterson's mayor and police justice.<sup>1</sup> Although the commission was heralded as a great saving to local taxpayers and an attack on corrupt aldermen and municipal officials, it reflected tensions within the local Democratic party and moves to increase local party influence over city appointments.<sup>2</sup> The Commission proved shortlived. Soon after its creation Paterson's Mayor Beveridge declared his belief that appointive commissions would never gain favour over elective offices.<sup>3</sup> He proved correct. Two years later during a general walkout in the local silk industry, Mayor Christian Braun, reacted to demonstrative millhands, by bypassing the

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian February 1, 9, 16 and 25 1892.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. February 5, 6, 9, 16, 24 and 26 1892.

<sup>3</sup>ibid. February 16 1892.

Commission and personally supervising the preservation of order in the city.<sup>1</sup> His action both questioned the raison d'etre of the commission and demonstrated that, in times of crisis, popular pressure on elective officials could not be easily ignored. The commission was abandoned soon after.

Despite the failure of the Police Board of 1892 the cry for commission rule continued to swell throughout the 1890s and on into the new century. The abolition of the Police Board in 1894 prompted local advocates of reform to declare their continued faith in city commissions. A Citizens Reform League asked: "Is it (commission rule) not the more enlightened way in which almost all modern cities are carrying on their own affairs?"<sup>2</sup> Both the local political machine and its officeholders, city aldermen, were objects of the League's spleen. "Boodling" and corruption, it declared, are "...a burning shame and a...disgrace to this already overdisgraced little State".<sup>3</sup> The relationship between city officers and local franchise corporations prompted further rebuke. The street railroad corporation, the "telephone monopoly" and the Erie railroad were all held up to public scorn. But behind them, and more insidious, lurked the grasping fingers of

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Press March 9, 12 and 14 1894.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Pencilings March 3 1894.

<sup>3</sup>ibid. September 30 1894.

corrupt politicians:

"Corporations are not the incarnation of evil as some would have us think. Kept in their proper sphere they are the dispensers of much good, nor do they menace the public weal half as much as those who, taking advantage of their offices, seize every opportunity to subject them to what is known in privileged circles as the 'bleeding process'".

announced local reformers.<sup>1</sup> Commission government was the cure. Its supporters were convinced that such a "state of affairs cannot be effected under a Commission...."<sup>2</sup>

Though the demand for commission government appeared to emanate from indignant taxpayers, perhaps not dissimilar from Hofstadter's middle class progressives, it was amplified by a significant lower class and radical critique of urban corruption. From the outset lower class reformers held reservations about city commissions. Popular control of both corporations and municipal government was central to their criticisms. Matt Maguire, a machinist and city alderman on the Socialist Labor Party ticket from 1894-1898, led a sustained and scathing attack on municipal corruption during his years at City Hall. Elected in opposition to a "regular" machine candidate, Maguire soon made plain his position by supporting councilman Stiles, a spokesman of the Citizens' Reform League, for the presidency of the Board of Aldermen.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter Maguire launched an unceasing barrage of criticism at municipal corruption.

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Pencilings January 2 1892.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. March 3 1894.

<sup>3</sup>Paterson People July 14 1894.



He was less concerned with the form of government than with business manipulation of municipal officers. The debased morality of public life, for Maguire, only reflected the inordinate and uncontrolled power of corporate business. The resultant evil was not personified by avaricious aldermen and harassed taxpayers, but by inadequate schooling, poor public facilities and exorbitant charges for essential services.<sup>1</sup> Maguire's solution was not commission government, but municipal ownership of city franchises. "Good government", Maguire lectured the Board of Aldermen in 1894, is "government by the people, for the people".<sup>2</sup> Public ownership of municipal utilities satisfied Lincoln's dictum. It both left government and utility regulation subject to popular control whilst rooting out corruption at its source by abolishing private profit and, its corollary, "The bleeding process". In 1895 Maguire campaigned upon the issue of municipal ownership of the city's water supply. Although ultimately unsuccessful the campaign marked growing publicity for the cause of municipal reform.<sup>3</sup>

By the late 1890s criticism of both the form and personnel of Paterson's city government was rife. In 1896 Maguire's persistent claims of corruption in the police and fire services

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<sup>1</sup>The People June 24, August 19 and September 23 1894, Press Clipping July 10, 1897 in Socialist Labor Party Papers, Box 40/2 Scrapbook II 1880-1903, Wisconsin State Historical Society.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson People October 21 1894.

<sup>3</sup>Handbill of the Paterson Socialist Labor Party, April 4 1895 in S.L.P. Papers Box 8/3 Wisconsin State Historical Society. The People April 7, July 28 1895 and see S.L.P. electoral platform May 23 1897.

led to well-publicized investigations. Maguire was supported by the city's clergy. The local Evangelical Alliance denounced the police for accepting bribes from prostitutes and saloon-keepers. It claimed patrolmen were turning a blind eye to violations of the Sunday-closing law and to houses of ill repute in the city. As patrolmen were aldermanic appointments fury was again vented against the city fathers. The clergy held up the English system of local government as a fitting model of municipal administration; and at the minimum they demanded the present aldermanic system be replaced by the election of Aldermen-at-large.<sup>1</sup> Maguire probably shared little of the clergy's faith in political re-organization. Nevertheless strange bed-fellows though they appear, the common ground shared by a socialist and Paterson's churchmen indicated the primacy of municipal corruption as a local political issue. It was given similar precedence that same year in an address by a local Catholic father at the opening of the new City Hall. Contrasting the "elegant new quarters" with "abuses that have crept into the management of city affairs," he called for a new attitude towards municipal administration, based upon businesslike and not partisan considerations. "Citizens must remember", he urged,

"...that the relations which they bear to our city employees are the same as the relations which exist between bankers and their clerks. If the bankers leave the management to the clerks mistakes or worse will occur, and all at once a crash is heard....

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Daily Guardian January 8, 16, 17, February 8, March 3, 13 and 17 1896.



Just as in the management of railroads, insurance or silk corporations the political creed of the members is never mentioned, so it should be in city government. It is a hopeful sign of the times to see men of education, lawyers, professors and literary bodies discussing the science of government. The scattering broadcast amongst the people of magazine and newspaper articles upon this subject would necessarily enlighten them and enable them to discharge intelligently their civic duties. One of the best means of reaching our own fellow citizens would be by public meetings held under the auspices of the Board of Trade. This body composed as it is of enlightened men in almost every walk of life, cannot help exerting vast influence with the masses". 1

The notion that municipal governing was essentially a question of efficient and businesslike administration appeared to be taking firm root.

As the "progressive movement" flourished nationwide after 1900 it was aped in a host of localities. In Paterson the demand for municipal reform was always its most prominent feature. Various groups had a direct concern in its outcome, from temperance reformers to over-taxed manufacturers. Increasingly a re-fashioned city government was projected, by interested parties, as a panacea for the community's ailments. Nevertheless the populist call for "clean government" reflected no more than a loose alliance of interests. Most were discrete and often mutually conflicting. Above all else, the previously dormant tension between workingmen's and middle class reform interests was exposed. For a time it threatened

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson City Hall Commission The City Hall, Paterson (Paterson, 1896) pp.69-70.



to bifurcate the local movement for municipal reorganization.

J.P. McDonnell, New Jersey's veteran labor activist, sustained the earlier working class interest in reform. He attacked the growth and influence of trusts, campaigned for municipal ownership of essential services, and generally supported any reformers who promoted the interests of workingmen. Thus in 1903 local assemblyman Van Blancorn was warmly praised in the National Labor Standard for his bill to limit child labor in New Jersey factories.<sup>1</sup> On this and many other issues, McDonnell's position differed little from what it had been two decades before. In response to the new call for political and electoral changes McDonnell's attitude was more complex. He was prepared to support only measures that would produce tangible benefits for New Jersey's laboring class. His backing of middle class "taxpayers" was restricted to those concerns which they directly shared with workingmen. McDonnell, like Maguire, endorsed the call for municipal ownership of public utilities. He was anxious that trade unionists throughout the state should push to end corporation control of essential services and encourage popular participation (in this case, ownership) in municipal affairs. Though rebuked McDonnell even pressured the State Federation of Labor into declaring its position on the question. Long after

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<sup>1</sup>National Labor Standard February 14 1903.

New Jersey's leading unionists refused to support the movement for municipal ownership McDonnell continued to endorse it.<sup>1</sup>

McDonnell also joined the New Jersey Direct Legislation League, supported the direct election of senators and civil service reform, and attacked corruption in the handing out of city contracts.<sup>2</sup> His stance on the latter was characteristic of the pragmatic gains McDonnell sought for workingmen in progressive measures. Corrupt city contracts were attacked not as an affront to public morality or a waste of municipal funds, but because "outside" contractors employed non-citizens and non-Paterson residents at below union rates of pay. "Have the Board of Aldermen of this city, sprung as they are from the ranks of the working people - have they nothing to say about this open unfairness to their own constituents", McDonnell wondered.<sup>3</sup> Like the city's businessmen McDonnell was aware that Paterson's precarious economy did not augur well for the future. He was anxious that expansion should boost local firms and provide jobs for the city's workers. The decline in the number of silk manufacturers threatened the economic viability of a host of small retail businesses. Big city department stores moved in to replace them, a feature

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<sup>1</sup>ibid. April 13, June 1 and August 31 1899.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. February 16 1899, June 1 1899, August 24 1899, February 28 1903.

<sup>3</sup>ibid. April 11, August 24 1899.

McDonnell found particularly distasteful. Local merchants, "...have been for years the pioneers in every movement that looked to the betterment and well being of this community", he argued. Macy & Co., Siegel Cooper & Co. and "other big concerns in New York City" would neither provide jobs for native sons nor support in City Hall for city workingmen. Above all, they would do nothing to reverse the economic plight of the city. "Every dollar spent (with these big city concerns) stays in New York", McDonnell observed.

"Not a cent of the money comes back to us in wages, in rent, in taxes or in any way. None of those big city concerns ever contributed a dollar either to beautify this town or to add to its comforts or its pleasures. They take all the money we have - and leave us the remainder". <sup>1</sup>

Yet for all his reservations about corruption at City Hall and local economic stagnation, McDonnell was adamantly opposed to replacing the aldermanic municipal system with appointive commissions. He saw commission government as part of a much larger movement to refashion American civilization in the interests of big business. McDonnell pilloried America's imperial ambitions, and the influence of trusts "...in their work of debauching the public sentiment and conscience of the people". The American people stood at a crossroads:

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve, God or Mammon, the trades unions or the trusts, the principles of the Declaration of Independence or an imperial government".

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<sup>1</sup>National Labor Standard August 10 1899, April 19 1901.



Just as newly-won subjects overseas had "...the right of every people to choose for themselves the form of government under which they will live", so too did Americans at home. Commission government, for McDonnell, was not popular government, but a means of removing public officials from popular accountability. "The privileged classes have no use for popular government", he announced. "A large army and an imperialistic government is what they want...." Conversely the working class had no use for commission rule.<sup>1</sup>

Immediately the local movement for commission rule began to attract significant attention McDonnell announced his dissension. The "new style" government, popularized by President Roosevelt, would remove politicians from popular accessibility." If Paterson is to have Commissions, they must be elective, not appointive", declared McDonnell. "Let the people rule". The Taxpayers' Association, most active of Paterson's reform groups and chief proponent of appointive commissions, was vehemently attacked. McDonnell foresaw the perils of placing appointive powers in the hands of a single figure, the mayor, and the resultant decline in neighbourhood representation at City Hall. A board of aldermen uniformly negligent of workers' interests was extremely unlikely, but a mayor much less so. Such considerations produced McDonnell's characteristic attitude to municipal reform:

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<sup>1</sup>National Labor Standard August 3, 24, September 7 1899.

"The people of Paterson are opposed to Appointive Commissions and won't have them. The people don't see the wisdom of handing over their power to elect into the hands of any one man. Popular rule must prevail". 1

McDonnell died before Senator Hinchcliffe's bill transformed Paterson's city government. Had he lived to fight against commission rule there is little evidence to suggest that the outcome would have been substantially different. Local workingmen continued to campaign for reform, and some fought tirelessly against appointive commissions. For all, the problem was to tread a path that protected their interest in progressive change, but which avoided them being subsumed in a broader movement for reform directly at variance with workingmen's concerns. McDonnell had faced the same dilemma but had never been forced to resolve it. Those that followed him showed only a dim awareness that it required resolution.<sup>2</sup>

Henry Marelli, local Italian lawyer with strong roots in the city's working class districts, and his cohort James Blauvelt, another lawyer, who in the state legislature pushed for reform of the law permitting employers' injunctions, illustrate the ambivalent and at times confused stance of many to the question of commission rule. Both were "New Idea" Republicans, opposed to machine politics and active in the

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<sup>1</sup> ibid. October 3 1904, December 13 1902, February 14 and 28 1903. (Emphasis in the original)

<sup>2</sup> M. Ebner "Socialism and Progressive Political Reform: The All Change-of-Government in Passaic" in Bruce M. Stave (ed.) SOCIALISM ANY THE TIMES (1975) pp 116-140.

drive for municipal reform. They could count among their supporters not only the local Citizens' Association, but also local notables, such as Sam McCoud, former president of the Brass Finishers' Union and real estate dealer, and Gustav Hunziker, ex-weaver and "self-made" lawyer. Such men, although not instrumental in determining the new city government, certainly attracted workingmen's support for municipal reform.<sup>1</sup> So too did Tom Morgan, local organizer for the Loomfixers' Union whose father had been a faithful supporter of J.P. McDonnell in Paterson a generation earlier. Morgan was nominated by the local Municipal Ownership League as an aldermanic candidate in 1906. He received endorsement from the local Trades Council. Although unsuccessful Morgan reflected the strong interest of workingmen in the eradication of municipal corruption.<sup>2</sup> None of these figures, or indeed any other lower class reformers, appeared to have fully considered the implications of their position. Most were probably not unduly concerned by the 1906 reform, which created city commissions appointed by the local board of aldermen. However with the 1907 law - instituting commissions appointed solely by the mayor - workingmen in the city realized too late the dangers McDonnell had campaigned against.

A hastily convened meeting in April 1907, protesting against Hinchcliffe's bill illustrates the anxiety many felt

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Evening News September 24 and 26 1906.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. October 13, 19 November 2 and 7 1906.



at the prospect of commission rule. City aldermen naturally led opposition to the proposed legislation, for it aimed to reduce their civic duty to the granting of municipal licenses. Machine politicians were also prominent, men such as John Boylan, Irish alderman from the Eighth Ward. Boylan also represented scores of Irish workingmen in Paterson and his presence can hardly be attributed solely to selfish interests. Most significant, however, was the prominence at the meeting of Matt Maguire, local labor activist and former crusader for civic reform.<sup>1</sup> The protest meeting contrasted sharply with a party of lobbyists for Hinchcliffe's bill, which travelled down to Trenton four days later. The excursion included not only local progressives, but the "boss" of Paterson's Democratic machine, William Gourley, and significantly at least four Paterson silk manufacturers.<sup>2</sup>

Taken together the protest meeting and the Trenton excursion indicate the complicated class and political currents to be found in the local movement for municipal reform. Whilst persistent workingmen's interest in reform measures belies the characterization of progressivism as a middle class or "corporate" movement, there is a sense in which Hays' and Weinstein's analyses remain useful. As these two Paterson incidents illustrate, the question of commission government clearly had political implications and a class dimension that transcended the concerns of Paterson's amorphous "taxpayers".

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Evening News April 5 1907.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. April 9 1907.

To be sure correction of urban abuses attracted supporters from all walks of life. More research would be required on the funding and personnel of the Taxpayers' Association and other reform bodies before clearer answers could be given. Equally important was the ethnic dimension to municipal reform.<sup>1</sup> It may well be the case that the political machine in Paterson, accepting that municipal reform was only a matter of time, accommodated itself to change and to engineering for advantageous positions within the new form of administration.<sup>2</sup> The support of "boss" Gourley for the commission bill suggests as much. Moreover Irishmen - who traditionally dominated the local political machine - continued to receive an inordinate share of municipal posts after the 1907 reform. The list of city officers in 1908 is peppered with Celtic names.<sup>3</sup> The new mayor, Andrew F. McBride, was an Irishman, and the progeny of Erin dominated the re-organized police and fire services.

Overriding both, and of signal importance, was the new and unprecedented involvement of businessmen in the reform movement, and more starkly, in the new city commissions established in 1907. Weinstein has labelled the city commission movement "...a plan to make government more businesslike and to attract businessmen to government". Paterson's mill-owners clearly conform to Weinstein's model of "small businessmen" who "...as participants in local chambers of commerce

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<sup>1</sup>W. Issel "Class and Ethnic Conflict in San Francisco Political History: The Reform Charter of 1898" Labor History 18, No.3 Summer 1977 pp.341-359, analyses ethnic and class conflict in the commission movement in the West.

<sup>2</sup>G.E. Nathans "The Mayor and the Machine" Passaic County Historical Society 1970 No.3 pp.1-4.

<sup>3</sup>Annual Report of the City Officers 1907-1908 p.3.



and boards of trade...could identify the future of their cities with that of their own business interests".<sup>1</sup> The prominence of local silk manufacturers in the Trenton lobby suggests the same.

Although millowners appear to have maintained a low profile throughout the reform campaign, they were joined by other businessmen who sought to put local government on a "businesslike" basis. John Ferguson, prominent in the Tax-payers' Association and a leading advocate of city commissions, was a Paterson contractor who obviously felt "clean government" would benefit him. Moreover William Gourley and John Hinchcliffe, machine politicians and advocates of reform, both had diverse interests in local corporations. Gourley was a director and counsel of the Paterson and Passaic Gas and Electric Company, the local Trolley Trust and the Public Service Corporation. Hinchcliffe too, had corporate business interests, not least in the local "Brewery Trust", a consolidation of Paterson brewers.<sup>2</sup> These individuals apparently feared little from a re-organized municipal government. All shared with city millowners a mutual interest in the future growth of Paterson. That growth could only be assured by retaining and expanding silk manufacturing, and by encouraging new industries - preferably "male employing industries" that would keep silk, "...a female industry well supplied with help" - to Paterson. In the years immediately following the 1907 city charter reform, the local Board of Trade stepped

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<sup>1</sup>J. Weinstein The Corporate Ideal pp. 97, 92.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Evening News October 29 1906.



up this campaign in conjunction with city government - offering to build mill sites at "...a reasonable rental" for prospective newcomers. The two developed "...a well worked out policy" designed to "give the local manufacturer a helping hand" and to attract "...male employing industries backed by all interests in the city".<sup>1</sup>

Significantly local businessmen, and particularly mill-owners, were appointed to important posts in the new city commissions. The ideology of "businesslike" conduct - the gospel of efficiency - pervaded the re-organization of municipal departments. Local editors enthusiastically hailed the new city commissions as a government of "sound businessmen". The commissions, comprising a Board of Finance, a Board of Public Works and a Police and Fire Board, certainly contained an ample quota of just such men. The Board of Finance, composed of four commissioners, included Leopold Meyer, banker and owner of a department store on the city's major commercial thoroughfare, J. Edwards Barbour, a member of one of Paterson's oldest and wealthiest millowning families, and William Buckely, son of a former city mayor with interests in silk manufacture. The Board of Public Works claimed Ed Weiss, manager of Paterson's German-American bank and Thomas Morgan a grocer with interests in a local silk throwing plant. Weiss was soon

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Board of Trade, Paterson June 1911 p.14, May 1912 pp.22-24, the Board's publicity handout Paterson, N.J.: A Modern City (n.p. 1910?), and Annual Report of the City Officers 1907-1908 pp.44-45.

replaced by Julius Brandes, a German-born ribbon manufacturer. Even the new Police Board, although the territory of old-time "machine" politicians such as William Ryan and John Mallon, contained Ralph Baer, owner of the large Helvetia silk mills.<sup>1</sup> The latter was surely an unusual, and provocative, choice in the key area of municipal government responsible for maintaining peace during industrial disputes. Yet Baer's appointment was neither fortuitous nor the result of a hasty and ill-judged assessment. At the time of the 1913 strike the Police Board included Commissioner Bailey, partner in one of Paterson's largest silk mills.<sup>2</sup> Both men reflected the new prominence of manufacturers and businessmen in city government, working in partnership with machine politicians but at the same time bringing their own interests to bear in municipal decision-making.

Municipal reform in Paterson bore important similarities to the emergence of the "corporate ideal" depicted by James Weinstein. Most historians have, however, focused almost exclusively upon the ideological and legislative dimensions of "corporate rule", and upon the small elite which shaped it. If commission government is to be interpreted within this framework it is important to make clear that the effects of the new municipal order reverberated far beyond the confines of National Civic Federation conventions, corporation boardrooms and a handful of trade union headquarters. The gospel of efficiency infused decision-making throughout local government,

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Evening News April 15 1907.

<sup>2</sup>C.I.R. III p. 2592.



and frequently at the most mundane level. Most importantly, it did not always promote class harmony and a common aspiration "toward the good society for all citizens".<sup>1</sup> It could be, and was, interpreted in various fashions by local officials. Paterson's Police Commissioners might mouth the vocabulary of a national business elite but their actions and decisions mocked a view of them as corporate minions. The social control desired by far-sighted politicians and business leaders was not easily, or even demonstratively, translated into the programmes of the new city commissions.

The re-vivified Paterson Police Department revealed as much. The creation of a Police Commission, freed from the shackles of suspicious Aldermen and their demonstrative constituents, provided the means to refashion the city force. Immediately Chief Bimson prodded the new commissioners into a campaign to strengthen and modernize his department. Unlike his predecessor Chief Graul, John Bimson had traditionally adopted a hostile attitude towards workingmen's demonstrations, and frequently had been singled out for villification by strikers. To these long-standing antipathies Bimson added an intense fear mixed with contempt for the city's Italians. The uproar of 1902, when Bimson had temporarily replaced his suspended chief as head of the Police Department, was not easily forgotten. Moreover the indignity of subordination to state

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<sup>1</sup>Weinstein The Corporate Ideal p.xiv.



militia in 1902 still rankled. Bimson was determined to prevent a repetition. By 1907 the Chief's problems extended beyond plans to contain unruly millhands in future disputes. He was still conducting investigations into the Italian anarchist community - a campaign which culminated, the following year, in the suppression of their journal. To these burdens was added the ominous growth of "Black Hand" crime in the city. Two months prior to the commission law, Justice of the Peace Robert Cortese, a close informant of Bimson's, had been viciously murdered by unknown, but presumably, Italian criminals. Cortese's death caused a sensation throughout Paterson, and may well have been the final straw in Bimson's resolution to expand and revitalize his department. Certainly Bimson's aims, and the reforms he introduced, seemed to reflect Paterson's rather special policing problems. They co-incided with the aims of corporate reformers only in so far as they reflected Bimson's concern with more "efficient" criminal detection, but can hardly be interpreted as derivative, or even directly influenced by that source. The outcome of the Chief's modernization programme was to intensify, at least in the short-term, the social and class division in the city, as the 1913 strike made clear.

Immediately the commission bill became law the Police Chief called for an expansion of his force, for two Italian recruits to assist in the detection of Italian crimes, and for a new precinct station in the heavily Italian-populated Riverside section of the city.<sup>1</sup> The response of the Police

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Evening News April 6 1907.

Commissioners was revealing. It demonstrated that if they did not fully endorse Bimson's programme, they too shared little in common with a corporate elite. Political favour - a patrolman's job was traditional reward for political assistance - was an important consideration in expanding and re-organizing the force. The attitude of some commissioners revealed the extent to which the political machine adapted to "clean government". One commissioner dissented from Bimson's plea for Italian recruits with the categorical statement that "Irishmen make the best policemen".<sup>1</sup> Particularly if they are loyal supporters, he might have added. Argument raged for weeks over the numbers of new policemen and who they should be. Commissioner Ryan publicly announced: "I wish applicants would stop bothering me at my home". Presumably prospective patrolmen agreed with his assessment:

"I regard the position of a patrolman a gentleman's job, especially for men who have worked in the shops, and I want men appointed to the force to be of that make-up to appreciate their job and not abuse it".<sup>2</sup>

Ryan pressed a case for thirty five additional men. All should be under thirty years of age and none should receive appointment in return for political favours. Nevertheless candidates were supported by prominent city officials and politicians, and not all, one suspects, for purely disinterested reasons. Senator Hinchcliffe nominated a possible Italian recruit. Bimson and Judge Scott pressed for Pat Zirpoli, a barber and associate of Cortese's. Joe Puglia, Italian contractor and "mayor" of the city's Little Italy, endorsed two more Italian

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Evening News April 10 1907.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. April 12 1907.



candidates; both of them subsequently appointed.<sup>1</sup>

The wrangling over Italian recruits typified the more general problem of who the new patrolmen would be. Disagreement amongst the commissioners and between the Police Board and the Mayor could not be suppressed. All sought political kudos from the appointments. Commissioner Mallon, adopting a lofty pose, announced that the names of all candidates would be publicized and subject to two weeks scrutiny before any new men were sworn in.<sup>2</sup> The Commissioner's statement acted as a signal for a new surge of applications. Prominent local figures, such as James McGrath, ex-chairman of the dyeworkers union, announced their intention to join up. "Hundreds loitered" outside City Hall on the night the new recruits were named. All men eventually accepted were sponsored by aldermen, the mayor, a police commissioner or some other prominent city official.<sup>3</sup> The expansion of the force was the cue for a "shake-up" in the Police Department, Chief Bimson announced. Aged patrolmen were retired, and new patrolmen given a stringent examination. New patrols were to increase the efficiency of the force and new disciplinary measures to root out corruption. Bimson even led a public inspection and parade of his men through the city streets. "Shirkers" on both the Police and Fire services were denounced. Drunkenness and bribery amongst patrolmen would be extinguished. Yet despite this frenzied

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<sup>1</sup> ibid. April 10 and 15, May 31 1907.

<sup>2</sup> ibid. April 20 and 25 1907.

<sup>3</sup> ibid. April 29 and May 4 1907.



public relations campaign rumours of corrupt appointments and political favouritism did not abate. The force was pictured as "...a dumping ground to give a lot of men life jobs", and patrolmen as "shirkers...not on the level".<sup>1</sup>

Reviewing the re-organization of the Department some six months later, Mayor McBride praised the effort to "build up (the) morale, esprit du corps and efficiency" of the Police Department. The city had benefitted by boasting a "better police record" than any other comparable city in the United States. "Considering the fact that Paterson is a manufacturing city", McBride continued, "with a mixed population (a large proportion foreign-born) the record is one which we have reason to regard with pride and satisfaction".<sup>2</sup> Chief Bimson reiterated the mayor's message. He went on to announce further police reforms, including new precinct stations within the city, additional detectives and an expansion of his recently introduced "mounted squad".<sup>3</sup> In subsequent years Bimson extended this work. More precinct stations were opened, patrolmen on the beat were linked to headquarters by a city-wide telegraph system, an Italian Department was added to the Bureau of Detectives, a motorcycle squad and later automobile patrol wagons were introduced, and the Chief adopted the Bertillion and finger print systems of criminal identification. In February 1912 Bimson proudly announced that his department

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<sup>1</sup> ibid. April 27, 29 May 4, 9, 14, 22, 24 and 27 1907.

<sup>2</sup> Annual Report of the City Officers, 1907-1908 p.24.

<sup>3</sup> ibid. pp.253-5.

had joined the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, a national records department. Membership would "bring the department to the highest degree of efficiency".<sup>1</sup>

Despite Bimson's exuberant language the expansion of 1907 and subsequent police reforms revealed that that "efficiency" sought by the Chief and Paterson's Police Commissioners differed markedly from the vision of progressive reformers or corporate executives. Far from extinguishing "political pull" in municipal government, favouritism and reward continued unabated. Machine politicians adapted to the new situation and continued their political dominance of the city. More importantly, lines of social and ethnic division within the city were more clearly drawn. Paterson's oldest immigrant communities, particularly the Irish, dominated city politics, and hence the new appointments created by municipal reform. The fifty five new patrolmen recruited in 1907 were almost exclusively Irish, British or German-Americans, a factor of considerable importance in the near future.<sup>2</sup> A corollary to this ethnic dominance of the "old" immigrants was both the exclusion of "new" immigrants from municipal appointments, and an intensified campaign against them, particularly against the city's Italians. An Italian Department and precinct stations in Italian neighbourhoods might increase the "efficiency" of the Police Department, but they hardly dampened nativist

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Guardian January 13, February 1 and 2 1912, C. Vreeland Who's Who in Passaic County (Paterson, 1917) p.13.

<sup>2</sup>See the analysis of the Paterson Police Force in 1913, Appendix.

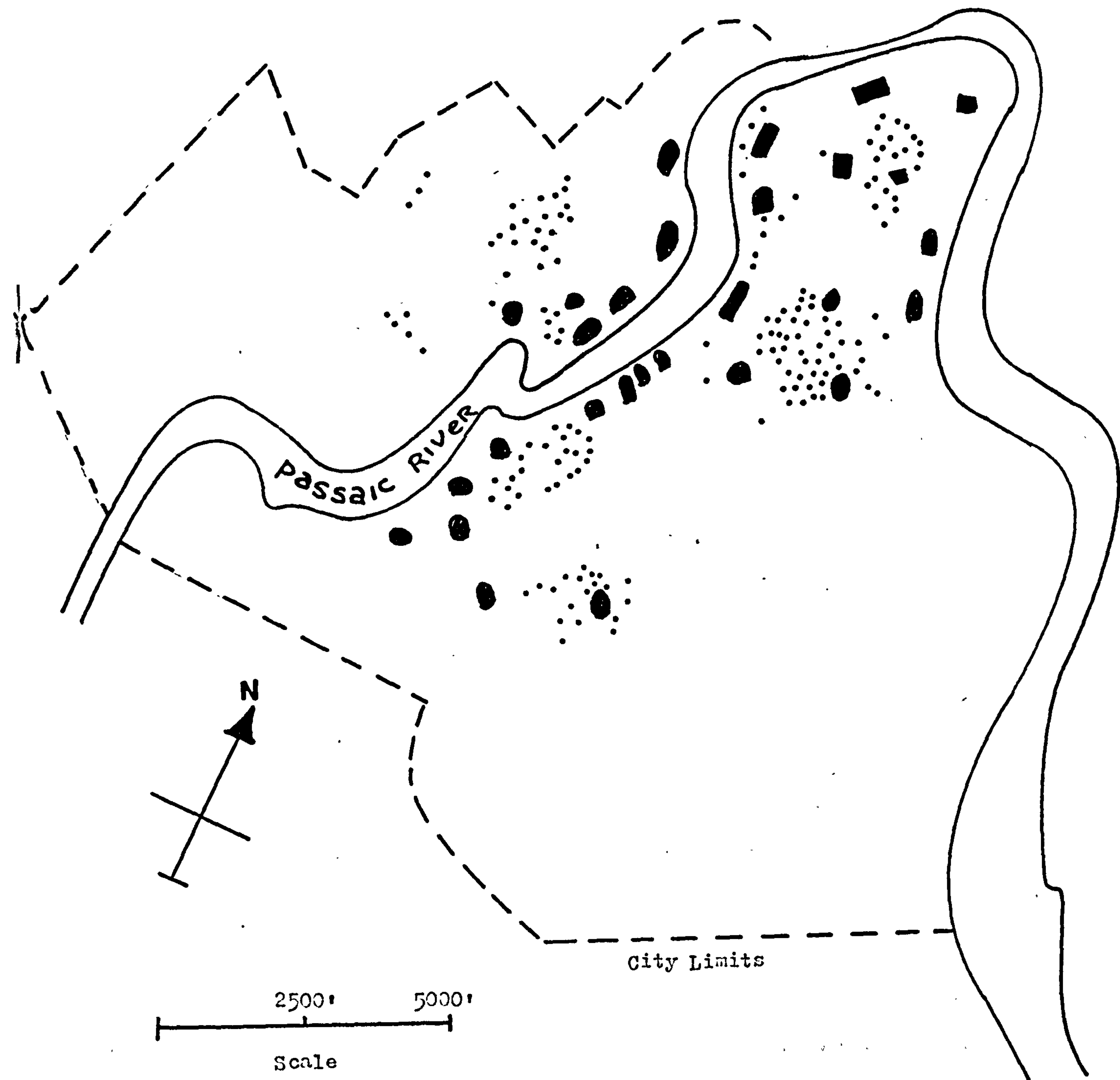


opposition to the Mediterranean newcomers. Even the appointment of two Italians to the force cannot be interpreted as a token of the rising political fortunes of Paterson's Italian community. It more likely reflected police difficulties (particularly language difficulties) in investigating Italian crimes. The 1908 suppression of La Questione Sociale indicated continued suspicion of the city's Italians.

Finally the 1907 reforms marked the exclusion of workingmen from accessibility to municipal officers. That the city's workers were increasingly Italians may have carried considerable weight in influencing the acceptance of commission rule. It is difficult to imagine a similar pattern of reform being adopted twenty years earlier. Then the political machine was too heavily dependent upon workers' votes to endorse such a move. And as long as the backbone of the machine's strength remained in Paterson's mills, manufacturers and reformers would be resisted. In the opening decade of the twentieth century economic decline and new patterns of immigration radically altered the relationship of workingmen to city politics. Significantly Italians carried little weight politically; indeed they had become a convenient scapegoat for both mill-owners and urban reformers. If both machine politicians and city businessmen could reach an amicable settlement on the spoils of office what matter were Italian silkworkers? The strength of the Police Department was increased by over 50% in 1907, a measure no longer resisted or even protested by city politicians. More patrolmen might strengthen millowners during industrial troubles, but were not the new officers favoured sons and reliable supporters of the machine?



Residence of the Arrested in the Paterson Strike 1913



● Residence of Arrested Strikers

■ Leading Mills and Dyehouses

(Source: W. Licht "Young Immigrant Workers")

## Chapter Seven

### WAR IN PATERSON

In 1913 a "war" erupted in Paterson. Although originating as an industrial dispute it quickly became more than simply a work stoppage. Whole communities were sucked into its orbit and everyone felt compelled to take sides, declaring in favour or against the strike. As a result the whole city was polarized. Under the leadership of the Industrial Workers of the World Paterson's silkworkers remained on strike for six months. They brought the economic life of the city to a standstill. Hundreds of arrests and several deaths resulted from the brutal street battles between police, armed guards and strikers.

The events of 1913 have long been notorious, perhaps because, for several reasons, they appear novel. Never before had Paterson workers struck for so long. Never before had their actions engendered such enmity and violence. For the first time an "outside" organization, the I.W.W., assumed a prominent role in organizing and directing strikers. A number of historians have studied the "war" closely and paid particular attention to its violence. But in seeking to explain the hostility they have concentrated almost exclusively upon the I.W.W., exaggerating its influence in the dispute. Wobbly leadership and strike methods have been uncritically taken as dominating both the course and outcome of the strike. Moreover the I.W.W.'s presence is taken as sufficient excuse for the



hostility of millowners and city authorities towards strikers.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst there is some substance to these claims their effect has been to overlook a number of important considerations. The strike came after more than a decade of intense anxiety over economic and social changes taking place in Paterson. It followed shortly after the refashioning of local government, but before the consequences of commission rule upon the traditional relationship of city authorities to strikers were apparent. For these reasons existing historical work has seriously impaired both our understanding of the strike and the nature and function of the I.W.W. in it.

The origins of the 1913 strike owed little to the I.W.W. The Doherty Manufacturing Company, scene of the initial walkout in January was hardly a typical Paterson mill. Situated a mile or more from the city's industrial heartland, it was a modern structure, technologically in advance of its downtown competitors. Its patriarch Henry Doherty, an English-born handloom weaver and self-made millowner, prided himself upon the good industrial

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<sup>1</sup>M. Dubofsky We Shall Be All: A History of the I.W.W. (Chicago, 1969) pp. 269-290. P. Renshaw The Wobblies: The Story of Syndicalism in the United States (New York, 1967) pp.112-118. P.S. Foner The History of the Labor Movement in the U.S.: IV The Industrial Workers of the World (New York, 1965) pp.360-372, J.R. Conlin Bread and Roses Too: Studies of the Wobblies (Westport, 1969) pp. 88, 90, 128-131, and Big Bill Haywood and the Radical Union Movement (Westport, 1969 ) pp.137-143. See also J.L. Kornbluh ed. Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology (Ann Arbor, 1964) pp. 197-226, G. Adams Jr. Age of Industrial Violence 1910-1915: The Activities and Findings of the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations (New York, 1966) pp.75-100 R. Zeiger "Robin Hood in the Silk City: The I.W.W. and the Paterson Strike of 1913" Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society 84 1966 pp. 182-195. M. Mooney "The Industrial Workers of the World and the Immigrants of Paterson and Passaic, New Jersey 1907-1913" (Masters thesis, Seton Hall University 1969), J. Wood "History of Labor in the Broad Silk Industry of Paterson, New Jersey" (Ph.D. thesis, U. of California, 1941).



relations and technical superiority in his domain. The issue which disrupted this apparent harmony had been simmering for more than two years. As with countless silk strikes before it involved the introduction of new machinery and a new work-load. The Doherty management claimed that the new four-loom system was necessary to enable Paterson manufacturers to compete with Pennsylvania annexes, which had already adopted similar technological advances. Although weavers' work loads would be increased, higher earnings would provide adequate compensation, argued Messrs. Doherty. Doherty's workers thought otherwise. Their response reflected a mixture of hard-headed self interest and a more general concern with the disruption of customary work routines. They argued that the doubling of the loom requirement and output of each weaver ought to be followed by a hundred per cent increase in earnings. The four-loom issue was viewed by weavers as part of the general "speed-up" which had characterized Paterson's silk industry for the past decade. Increased speeds on the customary two-loom weaving machine were taxing enough. Adolph Lessig, a Wobbly and local weaver explained:

"You have one running in front of you and one running in back of you and you have to watch them both. If you work with one and watch it you can't at the same time be watching another one back of you".

In comparison the four-loom machine would require physical and mental gymnastics. It was excessive and unacceptable. Lessig recalled four-loom weavers so exhausted by their labor that in their dinner break they were to be found "...lying down between their looms between twelve and one and trying to get some rest".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III pp.2469-2470.

Moreover, what if the four-loom system was adopted throughout the New Jersey silk town? Would it not result in halving the labor requirement of millowners? Would it not result in a labor surplus and act as a depressant on wages? Was the four-loom system the initial wedge in a drive to completely mechanize silk production? Henry Doherty Jr., managing director of his father's plant, certainly felt so. In expounding the virtues of technological advancement, Doherty indicated that "...as soon as you can get a loom to perfection, as they have in the cotton mills, where they can go home and leave the looms running...we won't need weavers".<sup>1</sup>

The Doherty weavers had initially resisted the introduction of the four-loom system by enlisting the assistance of the United Textile Workers, a New England based affiliate of the American Federation of Labor. The U.T.W., a conservative body, was convinced that the attempt to halt technological advance was both futile and costly. In 1911, when local weavers rejected its call to accept the new looms, it washed its hands of the affair.

The Doherty weavers persisted with a series of spontaneous stoppages, and switched their allegiance to new leadership, in the form of the Detroit I.W.W. The Detroit I.W.W. was an offshoot of its parent, the Chicago faction. Headed by the veteran Marxist, Daniel DeLeon, it was a small and faltering organization in 1911, overshadowed by its notorious

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2434



namesake and restricted to a handful of local unions in the New York region. It recognized in Paterson an opportunity to revive its flagging reputation, and hastily dispatched Rudolph Katz to organize the Doherty weavers. With limited resources and a dispute that was as yet confined to a single Paterson mill, Katz was remarkably successful. Within two months he had organized a general strike throughout Paterson's weaving mills.<sup>1</sup> The arrest of Katz and other strikers followed as millhands took to the streets, picketing mills in a series of threatening demonstrations.

Faced with a solid front of strikers, and anxious to complete their spring orders, some Paterson millowners offered their weavers improved wages. Other manufacturers, fiercely critical of these concessions, refused to budge. Their hands remained on strike. The four-loom question no longer remained the main bone of contention between millhands and owners, only the question of wages. A majority of silkworkers returned to their looms.<sup>2</sup>

Within a month the battle was resumed. Faced with a slackening of trade after the seasonal rush, small millowners, who had earlier conceded to weavers, now withdrew concessions. A second general walkout in the broad-silk weaving shops followed but to little effect. Rifts amongst the strikers weakened their position. Those who had earlier returned to work were criticised by weavers who had remained on strike.

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<sup>1</sup>ibid. pp. 2473-2477, Paterson Guardian January 16, 23, February 23 1912.

<sup>2</sup>New York Call February 24, 27, 28 and 29 1912.



Dissatisfaction with the leadership of Katz and the Detroit I.W.W., led to the city's Italian weavers inviting Haywood and the Chicago I.W.W. to Paterson. Wearing the laurels of victory from Lawrence, Big Bill briefly appeared in Paterson during March 1912. His arrival was too late to prevent a disintegration of the strikers' morale and a return to work.<sup>1</sup>

In itself the strike of 1912 was unremarkable. Its significance only became apparent the following year when I.W.W. organizers arrived to conduct a fresh campaign for improved wages and conditions. The failure of 1912 discredited both the United Textile Workers and the Detroit I.W.W. and, along with the Lawrence success, helped establish the I.W.W. with a reputation for strike leadership. In like fashion the dispute convinced both workers and manufacturers of the future need to prevent any break in ranks until a settlement favourable to all was reached. The spectacle of disunity enraged some manufacturers in 1912. A corollary to this was the partial return to work in February 1912 which split the ranks of strikers. Both millowners and millhands applied the lesson in 1913.

A major strike was possible at any time after the defeat of March 1912. Paterson silkworkers claimed that the general deterioration of wages, conditions and most hated, the "speed-up" of the past decade made a major dispute unavoidable.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Guardian February 28, March 7 and 13, April 9 1912. For accounts of the 1912 strike, see NJBS Thirty Fifth Annual Report 1912 pp.229-231. M.B. Sumner "Broad-Silk Weavers of Paterson" Survey 27, March 16 1912, M. Ebner The Passaic Strike of 1912 and the Two I.W.W.s. Labor History XI Fall 1970 pp. 452-466.

<sup>2</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2469, 2573, 2586-2589.

The four-loom issue was seen as part of this same process, while the passions it provoked indicated widespread discontent.

The threatened dispute did not come until January 1913 when the Doherty management again tried to revive the four-loom system.<sup>1</sup> Despite agitation by local I.W.W. members throughout the winter of 1912-1913, the organization exercised little influence over the calling of the strike or the initial walkouts. Doherty's weavers struck spontaneously in January, and the following month weavers in other mills followed suit. Local Wobbly activists, Adolph Lessig and Ewald Koettgen tried to organize shop committees in every mill in the city to mobilize support for the Doherty workers. Even so it appears that most stoppages owed more to the ingrained strike traditions and work and ethnic ties of Paterson's millhands than to Wobbly planning and co-ordination. Tom Morgan, a local loomfixer, described the characteristic method by which the strike was called:

"...maybe half a dozen workers in a shop will decide it will be a good thing to call them out, and with the class of people they have working in the mills at the present time, they simply say 'Come on stop the looms. Get out. Get out'. So God knows who calls that kind of strike." 2

Certainly it appeared to bear all the hallmarks of Paterson's longstanding strike traditions.

By late February 1913 the city's broadsilk mills had all closed. Within two weeks dyeworkers and ribbon weavers

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<sup>1</sup>Dubofksy We Shall Be All pp. 268-269.

<sup>2</sup>C.I.R. III p. 2418.



joined the walkout. Twenty five thousand millworkers were now on strike and Paterson's entire silk industry was at a standstill.<sup>1</sup>

From its outset the 1913 dispute was an ethnic, indeed an "Italian", strike. In the long tradition of disruption in the Paterson silk industry it reflected the concerns and characteristic actions of recent immigrants. As in the past violence and disorder became the predominant expression of collective action. Paterson silkworkers resorted to strike methods typical of "immigrants to an industrial system", who were only slowly learning "the rules of the game". They were undisciplined and inexperienced strikers, uncertain of forging solidarity amongst the city's millhands, and prone to disorder and violence to achieve their aims.

The disorder of 1913 appears part of a pattern long established in the city. Its roots were independent of the I.W.W., local in character and sustained by the closely knit ethnic and occupational ties of Paterson's sub-communities. County Prosecutor Michael Dunn recounted a variety of techniques used by the "foreign element" to intimidate and terrify. In the main they were directed against strikebreakers, but they also reveal targets closely identified with millowners' personal interests. Dunn claimed that twenty eight houses were "stoned at night, windows broken, families terrified",

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times March 4 and 8 1913, New York Call March 7 1913.



and fourteen homes were bombed. Three unsuccessful attempts were made to derail locomotives supplying mills with "scab" labor and supplies, by "boulders on the track" and by fastening chains around the rails. Between forty and fifty individual assaults took place - "most of them occurred at night" - usually with a length of "lead pipe" or with a "gas pipe used as a bludgeon". Clubs and even pistols were sometimes resorted to should the victim require further persuasion. In all twenty policemen were injured by "stones and other missiles thrown at them".<sup>1</sup>

Despite any official bias Dunn's measure of the disorder by striking silkworkers was undoubtedly an underestimate. His figures were based upon official court cases. The majority of assaults and disorders were either unreported or not pursued for lack of evidence. Daily the local press was riddled with accounts of beatings, "serenadings" and attacks on mill buildings. Moreover the effect of such attacks reverberated far beyond the sore heads of strikebreakers. Workers preferred to stay away from mills rather than risk the fury of pickets. Millowners employed private guards to protect their property and whole neighbourhoods within the city were divided between supporters and critics of the strikers.

Attacks on factories, millowners and their most trusted servants could not be taken lightly. Mills were stoned and shots fired through broken windows at blackleg weavers. Factories were dynamited.<sup>2</sup> Some millowners deliberately

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2550-2551.

<sup>2</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2446, 2547-2548, 2561, Paterson Guardian June 29, July 9 and 22 1913.

flaunted the violent threats of strikers. Moses Straus, manager of the Frank and Dugan mill, went so far as to direct police arrests of pickets outside his factory. Most were more fearful and with good reason. Henry Doherty Jr., symbol of the intransigent millowners, was beaten up aboard a Main St. trolley car. On another occasion Doherty testified that he "...had a gun drawn on me coming to work; an Italian drew a gun on me, but we chased him and caught him". Other manufacturers felt enough unease to arm themselves.<sup>1</sup> "Anonymous threats" and "Black Hand" demands were frequently received at the mill office. Dire consequences were threatened if their instructions were ignored. An alleged Black Hand threat to derail Erie locomotives, if the railroad did not refrain from transporting blacklegs to work was duly carried out. More common were Black Hand demands for the withdrawal of mill superintendents, foremen and even watchmen from the mills. At the Frank and Dugan mill strikebreakers, although anxious to continue working, were sent home when it became clear that their safety could not be guaranteed. Private guards and police escorted them home, followed by a jeering and hostile mob. Many were forced to change their residences, even though millowners "...had men posted", outside their homes, "at night to stop stone throwing". Albert Bohl, a "boss color dyer" at Weidmann's Dye Works leapt from his bed on the night of

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2592, 2439, Paterson Guardian June 6 and April 11 1913, New York Tribune June 7 1913.



March 27 to find his home bombarded by stone-throwing strikers. It goes without saying that "...the automobile police patrol arrived too late to arrest the assailants". Bohl was more fortunate than some. Henry Hudding, a strikebreaking foreman in another mill, had his home destroyed by a bomb. Their cases were typical of scores of attacks on millowners and their servants.<sup>1</sup>

Though the 1913 disorders appeared as part of a long-standing tradition, in one important respect they marked a new departure from the pattern of the late nineteenth century. The difference reflected the recently changed ethnic complexion of Paterson and its mill workforce. The dispute was characterized as an "Italian" strike, with an ethnic dimension previously absent from the city's troubled industrial relations. Adolph Lessig indicated as much when he summed up local opinion for the Industrial Relations Commission in the summer of 1914, "...everyone blamed it on the Jews and the Italians for the strike. The year before there had been a strike and they called it a Jew strike, and last year they called it an Italian strike".<sup>2</sup> Earlier strikes had been confined to the silk industry's dominant ethnic groups, but never before had strikers appeared so ethnically exclusive.

Strike arrests provide an interesting illustration of the ethnic and communal origins of the 1913 disorders. More

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2569-2570, 2561, 2489-2490, NJBS Thirty Sixth Annual Report 1913 pp. 203, 215, Paterson Guardian April 15, June 11, 27, 28, 29, July 18 1913.

<sup>2</sup>C.I.R. III p. 2469.



than 1,800 individual arrests took place, a figure unprecedented in Paterson. Italians and Jews were most likely to fall foul of the law. Of more than 1,100 arrested persons who can be reliably characterized, almost fifty per cent were Italians and Jews constituted another twenty five per cent. The residencies of the arrested provide further insight into the ethnic and neighbourhood character of disorder (See Map). There were five main concentrations, each in areas heavily populated by "new" immigrants, and each clustered around principal mills and dyehouses. Residents of the predominantly English-speaking localities were rarely arrested either. Irish, English, German and Dutch silkworkers were able to resist arrest through personal influence with police officers or, more likely, they did not actively participate in picketing and disorder.<sup>1</sup> It was the immigrants of the Italian-dominated 3rd, 6th and 9th wards who felt the long arm of the law.

Although millhands lived in close proximity to their workplaces it did not deter them from aggressive action against strikebreakers and millowners. Indeed neighbourhood connections and communal solidarities help explain the character and incidence of disorder. Intimate knowledge of local streets,

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Licht "Young Immigrant Workers in Revolt - The Paterson Silk Strike of 1913" (dissertation paper, Princeton University, 1973). Licht's figures and information were taken from official arrest statistics of the Paterson Police Department, which were unavailable to the author. Licht kindly allowed the author to reproduce his map of the residencies of the arrested.

and often homes or friendly havens were important weapons in the strikers' armoury. The sanctity of a front porch or a local bar was usually inviolate, even to police officers. To these vantage points strikers fled after an attack on a mill or strikebreaker. From here millhands could hiss, shout and taunt both police and blacklegs. John Reed described a typical scene in Paterson's Sixth ward:

At six o'clock in the morning a light rain was falling. Slate-grey and cold the streets of Paterson were deserted. But soon came the Cops - twenty of them - strolling along with their night-sticks under their arms....In every doorway, at every window of the houses clustered foreign-faced men and women, laughing and chatting as if after breakfast on a holiday...As the warmer light of full day came the people drifted out of their houses and began to pace back and forth, gathering in little knots on the corners.

Suddenly appeared a policeman, swinging his club. "Ah-h-h!" said the crowd softly.

Six men had taken shelter from the rain under the canopy of a saloon. "Come on! Get out of that!" yelled the policeman advancing. The men quietly obeyed. "Get off this street! Go on home now! Don't be standing here!"

A workman appeared with a tin pail, escorted by two detectives. "Boo! Boo!" shouted a few scattered voices. Two Italian boys leaned against the mill fence and shouted a merry Irish threat, "Scab! Come outa here I knocka you' head off! A policeman grabbed the boys roughly by the shoulder. "Get to hell out of here!" he cried, jerking and pushing them violently to the corner, where he kicked them. 1

Most police officers discovered their tasks to be more difficult than those described by Reed. Police Captain, Andrew McBride, claimed that this same neighbourhood was "...the worst place that we had to contend with for disorder". And what made it difficult to patrol? Simply the fact that

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<sup>1</sup>J. Reed "War in Paterson" MASSES IV June 1913 p. 14.



local residents could use the privacy of their own homes to resist police attempts to scatter or confront them. McBride explained:

It is a thickly settled population of Italians; all Italians in that neighbourhood, practically, and they are very old-time, neat houses, according to the old architecture; there are some very old stoops, old-fashioned, and hold a number of people ....They would gather in large numbers on the stoops, hiss, and insult, and at sometimes stone people; look around you couldn't see. 1

The murder of Valentino Modestino resulted indirectly from this same neighbourhood opposition to police and strike-breakers. Although the Italian was later to become a celebrated martyr under the direction of Wobbly strike leaders his killing is significant for the extent to which it reflected community support for strikers in the heavily populated immigrant and silkworker sections of the city. Valentino lived in the Third Ward, close to the Weidmann Dye Plant and worked in a local file works. He was not a striker or an I.W.W. member, but almost certainly some of his friends and neighbours were. Because his home was located near an important centre for pickets, he "...used to invite one or two of the strikers in at a time to have a cup of coffee or a bite of lunch..." A few yards from Valentino's home stood a saloon, the natural meeting-point and talking-shop for mill pickets. In such a locale Paterson's police faced difficult problems, exacerbated by the presence of private guards patrolling the Weidmann plant. A few days prior to Valentino's shooting "a riot took

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III p. 2560.



place" here - "...there had been stoops blown off houses, and bombs had been exploded in the rear of houses where people were sleeping, and the glass of the windows shattered and thrown upon the beds of children and wives".<sup>1</sup> Valentino's death resulted from a similar commotion. Private detectives, escorting strikebreakers from the dye plant, commandeered a passing trolley car to usher their charges through an aggressive crowd of pickets. Strikers' passions seethed and broke out into open hostilities. Empty beer bottles, grabbed from crates on the stoop of the saloon, were hurled at the blacklegs and their guards. Both the private detectives, and later police investigators, saw the attack as a premeditated design - "a concerted effort". Both pointed accusing fingers at the saloon and the fact that "...there were two boys in there with two hats full of stones that the men could use them; that is, they grasped the stones and slung them into the crowd, in addition to the bottles they were firing". The guards charged the pickets, firing wildly. In the ensuing melee Valentino was mortally wounded.<sup>2</sup>

Local saloons, children (perhaps strikers) from the neighbourhood, and even innocent parties not directly involved in the dispute, such as Valentino, all point to the community associations underlying strike disorder and workers' solidarity in the 1913 strike. That they were predominantly ethnic in character is not, in itself, surprising, but nonetheless

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2525, 2548.

<sup>2</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2562, 2567-2568.

significant against the background of Paterson's long strike history. In the past community support, often from the city's middle class and petit bourgeoisie, had stiffened the backbone of strikes, legitimizing the wayward actions of millhands and increasing the "pull" workers could exert upon municipal officials. Doubtless such endorsement was rooted in innumerable ethnic and communal ties, but prior to 1913 it was never seen to be exclusively ethnic in orientation and ranged against Paterson's leading social and immigrant groups. Previously Irish workers found allies in Irish saloonkeepers, Irish policemen and Irish aldermen and were joined by Germans, Englishmen and Scots, with similar connections, acting in like fashion.

In 1913 Italian strikers received assistance from their communities' independent middle class, but found it of little avail. The Italian community as a whole suffered from the taints and abuse commonly directed at immigrant millhands. More importantly Italian store-owners and lawyers lacked the political and social influence of earlier strike supporters. Their aids to silkworkers only served to bolster opponents' claims that the dispute and its violence was ethnic in origin and orientation.

Paterson's Italian communities responded enthusiastically to the strike call. Numerous retailers extended credit to millhands and those that were reluctant to do so found the consequences sometimes unpleasant. In July, an Italian storekeeper on Mill Street, Nicholas Delasei, was assaulted by

three strikers to whom he had denied credit.<sup>1</sup> Many storeowners actively assisted pickets. In March Borena Neva, retailer on Straight Street, was arrested in a strike disturbance, along with a "well-known contractor", a baker, a barber and a jeweller. The previous day, Abram Milstein, a Jewish shopkeeper, had been taken into custody for obstructing the sidewalk with chairs and benches provided for pickets at the nearby Hall Mill.<sup>2</sup> Similarly Mrs Gallo, a storeowner on Straight Street was beaten in a fracas with Patrolman Ed Duffy. She took out a complaint against the City Police Department. Her action exasperated local police officers. Defending his colleague in court, Police Sergeant Murner explained: "...it is the outsiders that we have to keep after, they are the most active".<sup>3</sup>

Communal codes of justice, although nebulous and probably dictated by custom, often informed group attitudes to the strike. They are most readily discerned in the Black Hand threats to fellow Italians who were strikebreaking. Michele Coscia received the following note in March 1913:

"Dear Friend - We ar writing this letter to ask a favour of you. There are seven girls out on strike at...mill. They are not scabs. Your daughter is working in this place and we want you to call her out. If you do not you will have a cause to be sorry". (sic)

The letter was signed with a grinning face a symbol, a local journal noted, "significant to the foreigner, and means to

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Guardian July 25 1913.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. March 26 and 27 1913.

<sup>3</sup>Paterson Guardian March 29 1913.



imply death".<sup>1</sup> Mose Laporte, another Italian strikebreaker was similarly warned:

"Signor Mose:

You do not realize how much bread you are taking away from the mouths of a whole lot of poor children ....Vile man you are against your companions, traitor against the working class...For the present do not fear. You live at Dundee Lake, and have the deputies with you...At the present you are well liked, for the time being, while you are a traitor against the poor fathers and families. Shame on a man like you....At present you are a friend of the bosses and of the Americans. You are a creator of poverty in the Italian class. Think for a moment what you are doing. Do not think that we are of the stupid class...." 2 (sic)

The anonymous threat, usual in the dealings of Italian "Black Hand" criminals, clearly had other functions, not typically associated with the ethnic community as a whole. Paterson's police and English-speaking groups viewed the Black Hand messages as further evidence of the intimate links between Italian crime and secret societies, anarchism and strike violence. There is little evidence to support their case. Paterson's anarchist community had long dispersed. No anarchist leader played a prominent part in the strike. Nor did any threat demand money as would be expected by Black Handers. Moral outrage and the meting out of justice formed the basis of these anonymous warnings, few of which, if any, were likely to have come from the real Black Hand. They were in fact, a form of popular pressure applied to workers obviously not cowed by

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<sup>1</sup>ibid. March 14 1913.

<sup>2</sup>NJBS Thirty Sixth Annual Report, 1913 p.199.

the picket line and public abuse. They constituted a final warning that severe punishment would follow if ignored.

Black Hand threats were the most sensational, but probably not the most effective method of group support amongst Italians. Aid and intimidation derived from an intimate network of neighbourhood relationships. The Sons of Italy, a recent amalgam of ethnic mutual aid societies, pledged backing for strikers. Its president "told members to stay out on strike", and despite a heavy toll on the organizations' finances continued to provide relief throughout the dispute.<sup>1</sup> The Italian owners of Turn Hall, James Cadgenella and Thomas Cappa, offered a meeting house and strike headquarters. Ignoring police harassment and the threat of closure, Cadgenella and Cappa continued to open their doors to strikers. They were eventually prosecuted for "keeping a disorderly house" and their property deemed out of bounds.<sup>2</sup> Community brass bands often provided meetings and processions with a carnival atmosphere. The cry of "Musica, Musica" invited one and all to participate.<sup>3</sup> Henry Marelli, "New Idea" reformer and Italian lawyer, whose father had labored in Paterson's mills, was the strikers' foremost defence counsel.<sup>4</sup> Bail for both I.W.W. leaders and less famous detainees was frequently raised by

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<sup>1</sup>G. Mason "Industrial War in Paterson" Outlook June 7 1913. p. 287, Paterson Guardian March 6 and 13, May 23 and 24 1913.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Guardian May 19 and 21 1913.

<sup>3</sup>ibid. March 11 and 20 1913.

<sup>4</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2529-2530.



local Italians.<sup>1</sup> Local restaurants and cafes, such as Tony Diello's on Prospect Street, were used as relief centres. Sometimes they could be adapted for other purposes. Frank Barbaro, proprietor of a coffee-shop near the Cedar Cliff Mill, was prosecuted for admitting to his premises pickets who were fleeing the police. Two horse drawn wagons, provided free of charge by James De Luccia, distributed groceries to strikers' families or transported the household possessions of evicted millhands to new homes "...given free by those who sympathize with the strike".<sup>2</sup>

Communal solidarity was widespread and effective within the limits of Paterson's ethnic neighbourhoods. Outside its scope was severely curtailed by the residential and social confines of Paterson's Italians. In dealings with the police, for example, Italian strikers lacked sufficient influence with individual officers to intimidate or persuade. The vast majority of patrolmen were from English-speaking groups and lived in localities apart from the "new" immigrants. Thus angry weavers might chant the station number of an aggressive officer, but to little practical effect. The officer was defended by his colleagues. Similarly, striking girls boycotted a police dance, condemning patrolmen to "...dance with their night sticks". But again the effect was purely symbolic.<sup>3</sup> Previous generations of silkworkers had benefited from exerting popular pressure on policemen, and in 1913 it was not entirely

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Guardian April 30 1913.

<sup>2</sup>ibid July 9 and 18, 1913.

<sup>3</sup>Paterson Guardian March 28 and 29 1913.



absent. Detective De Lucci, one of two Italians on the force, and used by Chief Bimson in the Italian sections of town, certainly suffered dilemmas common to officers in the past. Following disorders in the Third Ward, he was asked by his Captain, why "...he was using peaceful means instead of using the means he should have used on such an occasion to make an arrest". Both De Lucci, and fellow Italian detective Pirola, were reluctant to answer, or to name disorderly strikers familiar to them. Their superior offered his own explanation for their reticence. "Of course they were young in the business", he pointed out:

"...and being of their own kind, they knew more of them than Americans, and possibly they have several reasons that we don't know about. Sometimes you know so much it may deter you in your work a bit. In other words if you don't know the danger you are in, sometimes you will take a chance and get away successfully. And they, possibly, realized the danger more fully than an American person would have done, and acted differently".<sup>1</sup>

His analysis indicated that the potential for pressuring officers was slim, whilst "Americans", unfamiliar to their ethnic neighbours, dominated the Paterson Police Department.

Jurors at strike trials faced similar anxieties to De Lucci. Some were "...afraid to do their sworn duty by reason of consequences, by reason of effect to their business, and there is no doubt about it that they have a whole lot of reasons". "A whole lot of reasons" might constitute "threatening letters" or "gatherings that have spoken about them and threatened them".<sup>2</sup> After the conviction of strike leader

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III p. 2568.

<sup>2</sup>ibid.

Pat Quinlan one juror "...was followed for weeks by a rough looking person". Jurors were advised by a court official "...to carry a gun and use it if anyone stopped them anywhere". The jurors were "marked men". Another was warned "...tell your wife she must not let your child out of her sight for one minute and tell her to be very careful about receiving packages at your home".<sup>1</sup> As with policemen however, the effect of intimidation was blunted for most jurors were English-speaking people with "no strikers, no workingmen". The local grand jury was selected by Passaic County Sheriff, Amos Radcliffe. It was characterized by Henry Marelli as "...made up of manufacturers and businessmen who deal largely with manufacturers...not a single workingman or representative of the working class was on it".<sup>2</sup> Most of the arrested were charged in the local police recorders' court, where the recorder was both judge and prosecutor a factor further reducing strikers' influence. Here no jury system existed.

The pitfalls confronting strikers in the courts suggest the limited utility of disorder in the 1913 strike. Despite its long tradition in Paterson strike disorder was less effective than ever before. Perhaps because of its ineffectiveness violence was also more widespread and, at times, more brutal than in the past. Traditionally this social violence had been

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<sup>1</sup>Unpublished manuscript "Patrick Quinlan Defense", File 24, Rose Pastor Stokes Collection, Tamiment Library, New York University.

<sup>2</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2529, 2536-2537.



founded upon a bedrock of shared assumptions and attitudes towards strikebreakers and millowners. To endure it required that strikers' aims and methods were recognized as legitimate and just. The consensus of support for millworkers during industrial troubles was rooted in the neighbourhood networks of late nineteenth century Paterson. It had been breaking down for a decade or more under the impact of social and political change. The 1913 strike exposed its fragile and transitional nature. Even if the strike had been confined to the city's "green" immigrant hands intimidation and assault would likely have been insufficient. For by 1913 the mill workforce was divided between old-time, English-speaking workers and the more volatile new arrivals. Moreover to serve the millhands' purpose intimidation required the tacit approval, or at least indulgence, of city authorities. This was notably absent in 1913.

From the outset the English-speaking were reluctant strikers. A decade of animosity and prejudice doubtless coloured the attitudes of these older immigrant workers. Even so more immediate concerns were not unimportant. The fiery passions of immigrant strikers convinced many English-speaking workers of the futility of the walkout. Thomas Morgan, local organizer of the A.F. of L. loomfixers' union, struck a familiar note in explaining his opposition to the strike. Immigrant millhands, Morgan explained, had "...no definite understanding as to what they were out on strike for", they simply "...merged practically into one mass. You could



not hardly call it an organization because I don't suppose there was five per cent of them organized when the strike took place". He lamented the fact that even Italian workers, long resident in the city, failed to exert any influence or discipline over the recent arrivals:

"...those men when you form an organization they want instant action. Now, you know, as well as any man does if he knows anything about organization, you have got to protect your organization and you have got to educate your people and you have got to build up your fund and you have got to lay your plan how you are going to succeed. But these people seem to want instant action. If an organization is formed today, they want a strike tomorrow".<sup>1</sup>

James Starr, English-speaking secretary of the Horizontal Warpers' Union, voiced similar misgivings. His organization remained aloof from the "...too many immigrants coming into the silk trade that did not thoroughly understand the workings of our organizations, or had not become Americanized, and the manufacturers hiring those foreigners at all kinds of wages". Such workers "...have not had any drilling in organization work", Starr complained. They

"...can't see a form of organization whereby they won't be allowed to strike just as soon as they are organized. They have got some radical ideas in their heads and until those radicals have been supplanted with others by some kind of organization that don't stand for such things as what they would like to have and like to have carried out we are going to have trouble right on with those people".

Both Morgan and Starr echoed dismay similar to that expressed a generation earlier by J.P. McDonnell. Unlike

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2416, 2417, 2430.

McDonnell's, their criticisms were peppered with nativist prejudice. But there is little reason to doubt that both recognized the crux of their problem rested with silk manufacturers never-ending search for a cheap and pliable workforce. Starr recognized the cyclical nature of millowners' hiring practices upon union organization. For as soon as immigrant millhands "...had been here for two or three or four or five years they become Americanized and want a little more than they had been getting....and when the manufacturer finds out they are starting an agitation he tries to get rid of those men and supplant them with other foreigners, if he can do it, and in that way the agitation is kept going on". Such policies made stable trade unionism practically impossible for the vast mass of immigrant millhands. Silkworkers "...have had maybe 20 or 25 organizations in the last 20 years, but the trouble has been to get them to see the necessity of organization". Instead the constant arrival of newcomers made for an ill-disciplined and volatile workforce prone to the furious outbursts characteristic in Paterson.<sup>1</sup>

The English-speaking loomfixers and warpers both agreed that the strike organization formed in 1913 was doomed to failure. Both unions refused to join the mass walkout. "We did not recognize it as a trade-union movement", Morgan recalled, "and for that reason we did not wish to be mixing with them or mixed up with them".<sup>2</sup> Many more English-speaking workers

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2612-2614.

<sup>2</sup>C.I.R. III p. 2418.



shared the loomfixers' reluctance to unite with Italian mill-hands, but did not openly flaunt the strike call. The most notable group were ribbon weavers, who hesitated for two weeks before joining the original walkout, and whose return to work in July 1913 broke the workers' united front. They organized and held meetings separately from the mass of immigrant mill-hands.<sup>1</sup> Throughout they were anxious to disassociate themselves from the impulsive actions of immigrant strikers and the fiery denunciations of the I.W.W.<sup>2</sup> Intimidation forced many to accede to the general walkout. Manufacturers claimed that the older immigrant groups were "afraid of being called scabs", but fear of physical, not rhetorical, violence was the most effective deterrent against blacklegs. When English-speaking workers hesitated to strike in early March they were stoned and jeered.<sup>3</sup> More common were individual assaults on recalcitrant strikers. Morgan was quick to point out:

"There was a lot that went on that did not appear of the disorder; threats and intimidation, and all that, that was done very quietly. At the same time it was very effective".<sup>4</sup>

The rift between English-speaking workers and their immigrant colleagues was most clearly marked in intimidation and assaults on strikebreakers. In the final week of March 1913, for example, a blackleg weaver Joseph Thomas of Straight Street in the heavily Italian populated 9th ward, limped into

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Guardian February 27, 28, March 10, May 13 1913.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. April 1st, May 22, June 11 1913.

<sup>3</sup>ibid. March 3 and 4 1913.

<sup>4</sup>C.I.R. III p. 2420.



court supported by two policemen. He was to give testimony against three Italians who had attacked him a few days previously. The case was quickly heard, the Italians convicted, and duly led away. It was a common sort of incident. Such assaults were an almost daily occurrence during the strike. The assailants were Italian (sometimes Jewish). The victims were second-generation immigrants, usually of British, German or Dutch origin, who were strikebreaking. Often the blackleg had been warned to quit work, sometimes in so many words but often by "serenading" outside his home. Yet neither the courts nor the rough justice meted out by pickets did much to reduce the need for such attacks. English-speaking workers continued to work and strikers ignored the law. In sentencing the assailants of Joseph Thomas, City Recorder James Carroll warned: "I want to impress on you men that you have overstepped the bounds".<sup>1</sup> His words were wasted, for beneath the surface of their antipathy was a decade or more of tension between Italians and the older immigrant groups. Second-generation workmen were hostile to the new immigrants who had flooded into the mills and driven down wages. In their view cheap labor and inadequate organization was a major cause of the dispute. The Italians, on the other hand, recognized only the need for strike solidarity. Its necessity, in their view, was absolute.

A similar impasse divided Italian strikers from their traditional allies, the city's middle class and, more importantly,

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Guardian March 14 and 26 1913.

politicians and city officials. For the first time in an industrial dispute millhands were confronted with outright hostility from municipal authorities. Although the I.W.W. has frequently been pictured at the heart of this significantly new departure clearly other factors were influencing the animosity of Paterson officials towards the strike. Both police and city administrators feared a repetition of the 1902 riots. The unsavoury reputation of "Red City" underpinned official hostility to millhands. To stem the exodus of manufacturing plants and attract new industries to Paterson such demonstrations were no longer tolerable. Similar misgivings had been expressed by city officials for a decade or more, but prior to 1913 had not resulted in outright and uncompromising support for silk manufacturers. In the past Aldermen, Mayor and even police officers, prodded and cajoled by popular pressure, usually refused to yield to demands for repressive measures. Frequent middle class support for millworkers only added to silk manufacturers' problems. Only when the demand for repression was amplified by the "red scares" of 1900 and 1902 did this traditional alliance falter.

In 1913 two factors combined with fears of economic stagnation to produce a new and virulent hostility towards disorderly workers. First was the massive influx of "new immigrants" into the city during the opening decade of the twentieth century, most of whom found work, at the expense of older immigrant groups, in the silk mills. By 1913 Italians formed the largest ethnic group in Paterson's silk industry. Tension between English-speaking workers and Italians was a persistent feature of the strike. More important the dispute,



and in particular its violence was closely associated with Italian workers. As was noted earlier, it was in fact identified as an "Italian strike". Nativist opposition to newcomers gave both manufacturers and city officials leave to crack down on silkworkers in 1913.

The results of the recent municipal reforms combined with nativist antipathy to disrupt the traditional relationship between strikers and city authorities. It is important to recall that the new city charter removed all officials, save one, from popular accountability. It left the mayoralty as the sole elective office in local government. Neighbourhood aldermen, traditional allies of striking silkworkers, were replaced by appointees of the mayor. The new boards of commissioners did not need to be responsive to workingmen's wishes, nor indeed did the mayor even sit on them. At a sweep the municipal reform had radically altered the character of local government. Changes in municipal personnel accompanied commission reform. Two of the chief beneficiaries of the new city charter were millowners and machine politicians. Silk manufacturers, for the first time, achieved positions of considerable influence at City Hall. Their presence goes some way towards explaining official hostility to workingmen in 1913. Machine politicians were less obviously partisan in their sympathies. Many were of humble origin with careers rooted in neighbourhood political clubs and associations. They were however from overwhelmingly old-stock immigrant backgrounds predominantly Irish. Their allegiances were first and foremost to their supporters, English-speaking immigrants.



And in the tense atmosphere surrounding new immigration to the city, this usually meant at the expense of ethnic groups not yet incorporated into the machine. In 1913 Paterson's Italians wielded scarcely any political "pull" with the city bosses and could expect little favour in return. On the contrary, they were more usually the target of objection amongst the machine's staunchest supporters, old-stock immigrants.

Concern that the "good name" of the city was being harmed by unruly millhands was a prominent feature of strike opposition. In large part this hostility was inflamed by the I.W.W.'s leadership. Reporter John Fitch was shocked by "...the attitude of the so-called 'best people' in Paterson. "More than once", he witnessed "Patersonians, wearing immaculate linen and irreproachable clothing, shouting at me, red-faced and gesticulating, their denunciation of Haywood and his fellows".<sup>1</sup> Prejudice against immigrant millhands was often inextricable from this anti-radical bias, in part because Italians had long been associated with radical outrages. A year or more after the strike, Rose Pastor Stokes discovered hostility to the strikers had scarcely subsided. Interviewing a city clergyman she found him opposed to wage increases for silkworkers. "If men get more wages they would spend more money in the saloons, and there would be more drunkenness and crime". His view was re-iterated by others. "I have observed

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<sup>1</sup>J. Fitch "The I.W.W.: An Outlaw Organization".  
Survey June 7 1913, p. 357.

the workers", declared another interviewee, "...dirty, unclean and disgusting, staggering along the streets and into the saloons and, I think they are a disgrace to the community. It would be a sin to give them any more money to spend in that way".<sup>1</sup> Crime, dissolute habits and radicalism were part and parcel of the "red scare" which had gripped Paterson since the turn of the century - "...a hidden Cancer trying to reach the Vitals of Our Beloved Country", wrote an "old lady Interested in the Welfare of Paterson", to President Wilson.<sup>2</sup>

City officials were equally adamant that their civic responsibilities required stout and uncompromising opposition to the strike. Mayor Andrew F. McBride was deeply concerned by the "...harm that was being done the name of the city". He later lamented the "blow" struck "at the industrial supremacy of our city".<sup>3</sup> The spectre of Paterson as a hotbed of anarchism must not be revived. John Ferguson, a local building contractor, voiced similar sentiments. "Paterson has had its notoriety in the past", he declared, "...and we who think a great deal of our city and are interested in its prosperity and welfare did not want to have a repetition of the conditions in Lawrence". More than civic pride formed the basis of such

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<sup>1</sup>"Pat Quinlan Defense", Rose Pastor Stokes Collection.

<sup>2</sup>Unsigned letter to Secretary Tumulty, June 2 1913 in Reports and Correspondence relating to the Paterson silk industry 1913-1919, Records of the Department of Labor, R.G. 280, National Archives, Washington D.C.

<sup>3</sup>Annual Report of the City Officers, 1912-1913, p.xxxv.



expressions, as a local editor made clear. The threat of economic and industrial stagnation fuelled his opposition to the strike. He was appalled that new business concerns "... gave up the idea of coming here because they were really scared off by the industrial unrest here". His anxiety was, apparently, widespread in the local business community, even

"...among those who were not directly interested in this trouble, but who were interested to maintain the good name and character of this city without having a disturbance and having the militia coming here and all that sort of thing which would only add to the notoriety which we had in the past". 1

It was against this background of fear, prejudice and anxiety that Police Chief John Bimson and Mayor McBride took the decision to "nip the strike in the bud" in February 1913.<sup>2</sup> Bimson consequently banned strike meetings, broke up picket lines and dispersed demonstrations. His motives revealed more than a passing anxiety that the debacle of 1902 should not be repeated. The presence of militia in Paterson could only lead to public censure, suffered by his predecessor, Chief Graul. Moreover Bimson recognized that policing a strike in an industrial city posed special problems. A local editor expressed the Chief's views:

"A strike in New York City does not affect the entire community as it does in Paterson.

New York with its big army of policemen can safely permit agitators to influence the passions of a few of its workers, nothing serious can happen.

A big strike in New York is merely an incident. A big strike in Paterson means business paralysis and a state of uneasiness for every resident of this community.

New York can let professional labor agitators rant and roar, because it does not affect public safety. A similar policy in Paterson would mean a constant menace to life and property". 3

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2553, 2580-2581, 2584.

<sup>2</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2522.

<sup>3</sup>Paterson Guardian February 27 1913.



Civic officials and magistrates backed Bimson wholeheartedly, providing legal support and sanction for his policies. But increasingly their support, and indeed the whole campaign mounted to destroy the strike, revealed that more than concern for the "good name" of Paterson was shaping official opposition to millhands.

The new civic influence of manufacturers could scarcely fail to intrude on relations between police and strikers. Some idea of the extent to which businessmen's concerns shaped official responses to the strike is indicated by the personnel of the Paterson Police and Fire Commission in 1913. It was headed by James McWilliams, secretary of the Watson Machine Company which built looms and machinery for Paterson's silk mills. Alongside him, sat Thomas Morgan, a grocer with interests in silk manufacturing, William Hopson, editor of the Paterson Morning Call, and Josiah Bailey, partner in the giant Ashley and Bailey mills.<sup>1</sup> Responsible only to the Mayor, these supervisors of Bimson's force proved staunch supporters of the Chief's tactics. After the strike Bimson was to "... thank the members of your honourable board for your support ...making it possible for me to look after the welfare of the city..." Through "their arrangement with the sheriff" of Passaic County, Amos Radcliffe, Bimson was empowered to recruit "special policemen" and auxiliary "deputy sheriffs" to police both the city of Paterson and the county at large.<sup>2</sup> It came

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Guardian January 12 1912, New York Tribune April 2 1913. Annual Report of the City Officers 1912-1913 p.4.

<sup>2</sup>Annual Report of the City Officers 1912-1913 p.296.

as no surprise that private detectives, employed by manufacturers to protect mill property, were frequently recruited as "specials". Two federal agents, investigating the strike in 1914, calculated that sixty private policemen were "clothed with the authority of the police and of the sheriff", and concluded that they were "...employed, not strictly as an adjunct to the state authority, but as a private army of the mill owners".<sup>1</sup>

Liaison between millowners and city officials was often unofficial, the result of personal influence and favour. Strike leader Adolph Lessig complained: "...the day I got six months I saw a manufacturer come walking out of the recorders' room". An automobile, owned by the National Silk Dyeing Company, was at the disposal of Paterson police officers. Individual silk manufacturers were sworn in as special deputies while others directed the arrests of pickets.<sup>2</sup> More insidious, perhaps, was the flagrant partiality shown by the local judiciary.

The Police Commissioners appointed City Recorder, James F. Carroll, presiding judge in the police magistrates' court. By an anomaly in the New Jersey Constitution, all judges in the state were appointees. At the state and county level they were nominated by the Governor, at the local level they were appointed by municipal authorities. It was an unusual arrangement, paralleling the removal of city officers from popular

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<sup>1</sup>P.F. Gill and R.S. Brennan "Report on the Inferior Courts and Police of Paterson, N.J." Unpublished Reports of the Commission on Industrial Relations 1912-1915, Records of the Department of Labor, R.G. 174, National Archives, p.7.

<sup>2</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2463, 2524, 2592.



accountability. The federal investigators of the strike were quick to note that as no judges were elected, "...none of them are directly answerable to the electorate".<sup>1</sup> The Recorder dealt with all local arrests, meting out justice on the spot in trivial cases while for more serious misdemeanours referring cases to the superior county and state courts. In the Recorder's court no jury system existed. The presiding officer was a combined prosecutor, judge and jury. Appeal against his decisions had to be taken to a superior court. As in all courts, the City Recorder was empowered to set bail. Thus Carroll was a key figure in the official city opposition to the strike. Only with his cooperation could the police have pursued a policy of mass arrests. Carroll, Bimson, Sheriff Radcliffe and County Prosecutor Michael Dunn combined to swear in "specials", tie up strike funds in excessive bail requirements and badger supporters of the strike.

All arrested persons appeared before Carroll, and the vast majority of cases were adjudicated by him. Only the actions against I.W.W. leaders were passed on to the county courts. Most strikers were arrested on charges of "disorderly conduct" or "unlawful assembly". Fines and jailings were the common result. The marked contrast in the attitude of the superior courts to the cases of I.W.W. leaders is a striking indication of the bias of the local judiciary. Judge Minturn of the State Supreme Court upheld the appeals of a number of I.W.W. leaders against sentences in the city and county courts. Moreover Minturn agreed to allow the arrested to appear before

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<sup>1</sup>Gill and Brennan "Report on the Inferior Courts" p.4.



"foreign" juries in the county court, composed of jurors residing outside Passaic County, for "...a fair and impartial trial could not be had by a jury composed of Passaic County men".<sup>1</sup>

As a result Federal investigators of Paterson's courts made a scathing attack on the local police and judiciary. "We found that the police organization, coupled with the magistrates' court, became tools of oppression", they asserted. Legal authority was, "in effect, turned over to the mill owners". They viewed it as the logical result of the 1907 commission reforms:

"The Board of Fire and Police Commissioners....were in sympathy with the mill owners. One member of the Board was a silk manufacturer. As the Board controlled the actions of the police and the Recorder, the instruments created for the administration of justice and the safe-guarding of the rights of individuals became tools of oppression in the control of the few operators as against the 25,000 silk workers on strike".<sup>2</sup>

Such effective and rapid assumption of municipal power by millowners seems scarcely credible in a city traditionally amenable to working men. Yet it was possible because the spoils of office in the new administration were intimately bound up with the ethnic tensions dominating social relations in Paterson. Commission government made possible an alliance between city officials and millowners and ethnic prejudices and anxieties cemented it. Thus could Sheriff Radcliffe justify his aggressive policy towards strikers, by referring to "foreigners" as a "lower order of animals, unfit for free

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<sup>1</sup>Gill and Brennan "Report on the Inferior Courts" Appendix, Exhibit "C". C.I.R. III p. 2539.

<sup>2</sup>Gill and Brennan "Report on the Inferior Courts" pp.1-7, 20.

speech", and who naturally had no "right to be on or along the streets or sidewalks in the vicinity of the mills during the strike".<sup>1</sup> Mayor McBride voiced similar feelings. His reasons for opposing immigrant supporters of the I.W.W. were uncannily similar to those of Paterson's English-speaking skilled unionists. "No American citizen who understands the principles of the I.W.W., could under any circumstances subscribe to its teachings", he argued. If unionism was to be admitted in the city, "...it must be an American Labor Union, infused with a patriotic spirit and directed to American ideals".<sup>2</sup> Such shared assumptions indicate the common ground between city officials and old-stock immigrants. They also point to the ease with which millowners obtained sanction for their opposition to immigrant millhands. When James Starr, British-born member of the Paterson trades council, announced that the "police behaved themselves admirably" during the dispute, he merely re-emphasized the yawning gulf which separated Paterson's ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup>

Ethnic prejudice was most clearly revealed in the courts, and amongst patrolmen on the beat. Arrested strikers felt Recorder Carroll to be "kind of antagonistic" towards them, and "...in most cases they seemed to think he gave them more than they deserved; that he was too severe with them".<sup>4</sup> Strikers' counsel might argue in court, that his clients were "...impulsive and ignorant of the law" but this argument

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<sup>1</sup>D.S. McCorkle to President Wilson, June 9 1913, Department of Labor Files R.G. 280, National Archives.

<sup>2</sup>Annual Report of the City Officers 1912-1913 p.xxxvi.

<sup>3</sup>C.I.R. III p. 2614.

<sup>4</sup>C.I.R. III p. 2422.



usually fostered Carroll's partiality. The appearance before the bench of whole families arrested on picket duty, filled the Recorder with contempt and dismay. He usually meted out sentences indiscriminately, and sometimes with more than a little spleen. One unfortunate girl made the mistake of smiling in court. The gesture upset Carroll:

"She was smiling in anticipation of being released. Her lawyer had told her it would be alright - and so the poor girl smiled, and for smiling Recorder Carroll said: 'I will make you smile on the other side of your face' (Snaps fingers) 'Sixty days'".<sup>1</sup>

In the case of a strikebreaker, charged with murdering picket Vincenzo Madonna in an affray, Carroll declared: "I am reluctant to accept a complaint of murder against you, for I believe you did right".<sup>2</sup>

The prevalent attitude of Paterson's judiciary towards strikers was best summed up by the Passaic County prosecuting attorney, Michael Dunn. Comparing the 1913 strike with previous silk strikes, Dunn explained to the Industrial Relations Commission, in 1914:

"We never had such depredations during those times as transpired at these times, and this is the first time we ever had in our midst a foreign element that seems to have no moral motive or moral policy on which an adjustment of differences should be based".

Dunn saw the "foreign element" as propagator of strike violence, and sorely in need of a severe lesson in American liberty and justice. Presumably Dunn agreed with the remarks of John Ferguson, made before the same Commission. Ferguson, a city

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Guardian April 10, 29 1913, C.I.R. III p. 2526.

<sup>2</sup>Paterson Guardian July 9 1913.



contractor and staunch advocate of commission government in Paterson, justified the actions of local judges in much the same terms as Dunn:

"I think that the foreigner who comes here with these ideas of freedom and then gets this licensed thing thrown into him, should be made to respect the laws of this country and understand that he is to obey the law, and that we have laws and they should be enforced".<sup>1</sup>

Ferguson was certainly attuned to the glaring gulf separating the attitudes and morality of immigrant millhands from their social peers. His analysis appears even more pointed in relation to conflict between police and immigrants.

Commission reform had fundamentally reshaped the functioning of the Paterson Police Department and its relationship to the public. The size of the force had been increased some fifty per cent by the new Police Commissioners. Bimson's "shake-up" and reforms had modernized the department. Most importantly, officers were increasingly removed from the popular pressures so common in the past. Under commission rule the department was accountable only to appointed commissioners. No longer could popularly elected city fathers hope to influence the internal workings of the force. Bimson's modernization programme emphasized the same general development. The number of detectives - men not readily identifiable as policemen - was substantially increased. The numbers of motorized, and horse-mounted officers likewise grew. Increasingly policemen now concentrated upon specialized assignments, such as those in

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2550, 2552, 2582.

the "Traffic Squad" or in the Detective Bureau's "Italian Department".<sup>1</sup>

The character of Bimson's rejuvenated force was heavily influenced by its ethnic make-up. Of one hundred and forty seven members of the Police Department in 1913, personal details can be traced of one hundred and seven, from the 1915 N.J. State Census. Of this number the overwhelming majority were native Americans or old-stock immigrants. One hundred and one were of American, Irish, British or German origin, with the Irish clearly predominating. Italian representation on the force amounted to two members - Detectives Pirola and De Lucci. There were no Jewish policemen. A second outstanding feature of Bimson's department in 1913 was its youth and relative inexperience. Almost sixty per cent of the force had been appointed since the 1907 charter revision and re-organization of the police, many of them Bimson's personal selections. Predominantly Irish or native Americans, these new recruits reinforced the old-stock immigrants' domination of the department. The new recruits' average age in 1913 was thirty four years, almost fifteen years younger on average than the remaining members of the force.<sup>2</sup> These recent appointments comprised, in effect, a new generation of policemen in the city. They had no official experience of the disorders that had accompanied

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<sup>1</sup>In 1901 of one hundred and four members on the force, eighty seven were patrolmen. By 1908, although the force had expanded to one hundred and forty three officers, patrolmen amounted to one hundred and three members. Annual Reports of the City Officers 1901-1902, 1907-1908 pp. 135-137, 258-261.

<sup>2</sup>The youth of the post-reform recruits is, of course, relative to the then existing members of the department. Their average age at time of recruitment, 1907-1910, would have been about thirty years. By contemporary standards this may seem "mature" for new officers. At



previous disputes, and had been groomed under a chief proud of the efficiency and discipline of his force and pledged to destroy the alien radicals in his midst.<sup>1</sup> They comprised also a generation radically different in ethnic origin from the vast majority of the city's silkworkers and strike activists. The latter feature was re-emphasized by the residential characteristics of patrolmen. (See Appendix) Policemen residing in the heavily Italian populated 3rd, 6th and 9th wards were underrepresented on the force. Indeed in 1913 there was no policeman at all resident in the 6th ward. Both the ethnic and residential characteristics of the force served, along with Bimson's reforms, to accentuate the removal of officers from popular influence.

Bimson's policies for maintaining order in 1913 were not solely the product of nativist bias, though they were undoubtedly influenced by such sentiment and by his arduous and prolonged campaign against Paterson's Italian radicals.

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the turn of the century their age was probably not regarded as unusual. A job on the force was a "desirable" and much sought after position, as is witnessed in the scramble for appointment in 1907 (see pp. 272-273). Presumably a prospective policeman had to wait several years before his selection was considered. However if we accept thirty as a relatively advanced age, a number of intriguing questions are suggested. Among them: Was a policeman's lot in 1900 such that mature men were better equipped to patrol city streets? Did the selection process merely reflect the ageing of Paterson's established ethnic groups? Most intriguing, and unfathomable: Was it the case that selection reflected reward, from the political machine or the civically influential, for past favours, a factor which surely would have excluded younger candidates?

<sup>1</sup>Statistics compiled from Manuscript Volumes of the New Jersey State Census 1915 and the Annual Report of the City Officers 1912-1913 pp. 309-316.



The Chief recognized responsibilities to his superiors on the Board of Commission and, perhaps more significantly, to his "office" and department. He was anxious to pre-empt an appeal to the Governor for state militia. Both duties, in his eyes, demanded vigorous suppression of strike disorders. Bimson's prompt response to the walkout of February 1913 indicated the same. The Chief ordered the whole force to headquarters where cots were installed, a kitchen and a barbers' shop improvised. In addition the entire city fire department was sworn in as "special deputies".<sup>1</sup> All officers were assigned extra duties and expected to be available at a moment's notice should the need arise. Bimson was clearly determined to stamp out strike disorders and, freed from the shackles of a restraining mayor and indignant middle class, he was plainly able to do so.

In like fashion Bimson's recent re-fashioning of the Police Department bore fruit in the street battles of 1913. The two Italian recruits of 1907 were essential to the apprehension of immigrant culprits. Further they proved useful for recruiting police infiltrators at strike meetings and discussions.<sup>2</sup> The new equipment was at times an essential adjunct to police patrols. The squad's telephone system enabled the Chief to locate trouble and direct officers to scenes of disorder. Bimson's mounted squad - dubbed "Cossacks" by fleeing pickets - were a fearsome weapon in dispersing crowds.<sup>3</sup> Above all,

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<sup>1</sup>Paterson Guardian March 3 and 25 1913.

<sup>2</sup>C.I.R. III p. 2488, Paterson Guardian May 9 1913.

<sup>3</sup>Paterson Guardian February 25 1913.

the introduction of police automobiles made possible both prompt suppression of disturbances and the policy of mass arrests adopted by the Paterson authorities. In the past escorting arrested strikers to headquarters was a hazardous task. Culprits were sometimes freed by jeering crowds of pursuers. Patrol wagons put an end to this in 1913. Bimson's deputy, Captain McBride summed up his department's satisfaction with the new apparatus:

"I would say that the facilities that we had with automobiles was more than helpful to us. Had it not been for them we could never have gotten along. We could never have made the time. Between the telephone and the automobiles and the willingness of the men to work, is what made the thing successful".<sup>1</sup>

The "willingness of the men" was never in question. Bimson must have been satisfied, and perhaps even a little relieved, by the predisposition of his force towards strikers. Millhands complained bitterly of the incidence with which "officers became very brutal". The sentiment fuelling this aggression was never in doubt. "Several of the officers seemed to discriminate in certain ways as to arresting Italians and Jews, principally", lamented strike organizer Lessig. Missing was the familiar leniency towards millhands, and in its place "...animosity against the foreign nationality of the people". In an exchange before the Industrial Relations Commission in 1914, Lessig pinpointed the dramatic change in relations between police and workingmen. He was asked: "...did you feel that the police conducted themselves as you would do as a

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III p. 2564. See also Bimson's comments in Annual Report of City Officers 1912-1913 p. 297.

policeman, or not?"

Lessig: "Well, I thought I could have winked the other eye on many occasions. Many of them were silkworkers themselves a few years ago".

Q. "What do you mean by 'winked the other eye?'"

Lessig: "Looked the other way".

Q. "Why?"

Lessig: "Give the other fellow a chance".

Q. "What to do?"

Lessig: "Well, walk up and down; he was really doing nothing. They were simply too strict. No doubt about that". <sup>1</sup>

Others protested in a similar fashion. Captain McBride was later to contest these accusations, claiming that many patrolmen had relatives working in the mills, and "...all sympathize with the labouring men and women in getting better conditions".<sup>2</sup> His claims appear credible. Of the members of the force traced in the census almost half were found to have a relative working in the silk industry or to be sharing a house with at least one silkworker. Of the remaining only eighteen were living without a millhand as a close neighbour (within two houses).<sup>3</sup> It seems likely, however, that kinfolk or neighbours - if friendly - were English-speaking workers, perhaps strikebreaking. Nativist feeling was such that although many patrolmen were immigrants - admittedly old-stock

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III p. 2463..

<sup>2</sup>ibid. p. 2563.

<sup>3</sup>Appendix 10.



or second-generation - "...a great many of them don't regard themselves as such. They had been here a little bit ahead of the other fellow, that's all".<sup>1</sup> Although Captain McBride made appeals to foreigners to "...try to do as Americans usually do", his efforts were uncharacteristic of his subordinates. Most police were "very obnoxious", goading strikers with taunts such as: "If you don't like it, just start something". Striker Ed Zeursher described the typical confrontation on the picket line:

"They (the police) generally came with a drawn club, and sometimes with curses on their lips, especially if there were a foreign element on the picket line, and told them to get out of there, and called them Waps and Jews and such names as that, which incensed the workers a great deal".<sup>2</sup>

Strikers replied equally vociferously. After an arrest at Turn Hall, a "howling mob" followed police officers "threatening violence, kicking the detectives...and firing missiles at them". After invading the precinct station, the mob was only turned away by squads of police who had to "...start right in and disperse them with violence". Such incidents were not common, but hardly untypical of the sour relations between police and public. More usual was the barracking of individual officers, a tactic that had worked admirably in previous silk strikes. Strikers "...had a cry they used to use, kind of a boo-hoo, kind of a lonesome, wailful cry of derision, and showing distaste towards the police".<sup>3</sup> Its

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III p. 2463.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. pp. 2569, 2465, 2594.

<sup>3</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2560, 2546.

demonstrative failure to influence police actions suggests the incidence of violence in 1913. No other course of popular rebuke was effective.

In sum, confrontation and violence became the ultimate and only method of communication between Paterson's immigrant workers and their social peers. The deepening rift in social relations in the city, during the two decades 1890-1913 split wide open under the tension of an I.W.W.-led strike. Long after the Wobblies had fled Paterson the scars of "war" were still healing.

Too much can be made of the I.W.W.'s role in Paterson's great strike. The press identified it as a Wobbly strike and Paterson's foremost citizens endeavoured to support the same interpretation. Immigrant millhands were pictured as the innocent dupes of a handful of "anarchists" hell-bent on destroying the city's principal industry. Thus John Ferguson, a leading city building contractor, complained of the I.W.W. beguiling "...non-English-speaking workers, who are easily led ...and hard to control when their passions are excited". Police Captain McBride similarly attributed the strike uproar to poor immigrants being "...misled by those agitators who are very able and resourceful".<sup>1</sup> Of course both city administrators

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2579, 2565, 2569.

and manufacturers were keen to load the onus of responsibility onto the Wobblies. They sought to disguise their own misdeeds. Boosterism undoubtedly motivated them to present Paterson as a normally stable and law-abiding community, whose present predicament reflected only the incendiary activities of the I.W.W.

Unfortunately their partiality has been perpetuated - for different reasons and in a different form - in more recent analyses of Paterson's war. Essentially Paterson's millworkers remain, still, putty in the manipulative hands of Haywood and followers. Social history which focuses upon the organizational expression of working class activity has an in-built tendency in this direction. Historical accounts of the I.W.W. in Paterson are no exception. While the work of Foner, Renshaw, Dubofsky and Conlin has provided important and illuminating insights into the dispute, it has by and large glossed over the role of millhands in the strike, and the extent to which the dispute reflected tensions wholly independent of the I.W.W. It has failed to remark upon the important continuities between 1913 and the long tradition of industrial disorder in the city. Like countless strikes before it the "War in Paterson" reflected a half-century of struggle between millowners and an immigrant workforce new to industrial society. Disorder was the stock reaction of millhands to industrial crisis. The disorders of 1913 appear excessive only because of the new attitude of city authorities towards strikers. Past indulgence or lenience towards riotous workers now gave way to determined opposition. It revealed the extent to which progressive reform



had enabled silk manufacturers to wield a new authority in municipal affairs, and the degree to which nativist abuse and prejudice could intrude into industrial disputes.

Far from occupying the centre of the stage, the I.W.W.'s role in Paterson was limited. It too reflected the new divorce between millhands and municipal authorities. Whilst silk-workers could expect little local support for their cause, the I.W.W. might provide enough publicity and concern on a national scale to tip the balance in their favour. The I.W.W.'s function in the dispute was almost wholly devoted to this end.

The I.W.W.'s ability to capture newspaper headlines during the Paterson dispute was best personified by its leading figure, Bill Haywood. A former miner from the Far West, "Big Bill" had devoted his life to organizing and educating America's working class, not very successfully by 1913. Spectacular success in leading recent strikes amongst the immigrant millhands of New England quickly evaporated leaving a weak and disheartened minority of activists in its wake. Nowhere had the permanent organization of workers replaced the ad hoc solidarity Haywood so effectively engineered. It was galling and especially depressing to Big Bill, a naturally pessimistic man. Nevertheless when the call for assistance came from Paterson, he responded with characteristic verve. To be sure Haywood would have felt happier going to meet the rough-and-tumble miners of his native region, but he was not one to duck a challenge. He was heartened by the success of I.W.W. organizers in assuming strike leadership. Paterson's silk-workers were energetically united behind the strike. If

Haywood could discipline that energy and harness it to his organization there were surely grounds for optimism.<sup>1</sup>

Big Bill arrived in Paterson in late March 1913. Immediately the bitterness and attention surrounding the strike escalated. Haywood was popularized as the villain of the piece, the whipping-boy of outraged conservatives and a symbol of defiance for liberal sympathizers. His presence undoubtedly pepped the dogged spirits of local silkworkers, and as surely added to the misfortunes of overburdened Police Chief Bimson. Most importantly Haywood made the Paterson dispute a national spectacle. The drama of a handful of I.W.W. organizers and their ragged army defying hunger, cold and the excessive might of Paterson's millowners captured the public's imagination. It was heroic, tragic, and also good newspaper copy. For the next few months Big Bill monopolized the headlines of the New York dailies. Reporters flocked to Paterson in anticipation of the next sensation. Haywood's every word and gesture was hungrily taken down and printed. He revelled under the spotlight, intuitively playing upon the fears and predilections of his unknown spectators. Haywood demanded then acquiesced, threatened only to next counsel peace. The photographs and descriptions of Haywood in full voice, supported by a mass of chanting millhands served his purposes exactly.

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<sup>1</sup>J.R. Conlin Big Bill Haywood and the Radical Union Movement, W.D. Haywood The Autobiography of Big Bill Haywood (N.Y. 1929) pp. 261-277, New York Times February 26 1913, Paterson Guardian March 7 1913.



If the strike was to be judged as a public relations exercise Big Bill was triumphantly successful.

The Wobblies' grasp of the actual strike administration and control of Paterson's immigrant strikers was far less secure. Although Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, her partner Carlo Tresca and Socialist Party spokesman Patrick Quinlan had arrived at its outbreak, they exercised little direction over the initial walkouts or day-to-day progress of the dispute. They had been invited to the city by local Wobbly activists. They certainly had links with the local Italian anarchist community. Above all, the I.W.W. had an awesome reputation from success in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912.<sup>1</sup> But their assumption of leadership and popularity with strikers could not disguise the fact that they were "outsiders".

The formal strike administration, hastily assembled at the end of February, revealed the limited influence of the I.W.W. It was composed of a Central Strike Committee and an Executive Board. To the Committee were elected delegates from each mill. In total it was composed of almost three hundred shop representatives. Although Strike Committee delegates were frequently members of the I.W.W.'s Paterson local, as many had no, or only informal, connections with the union. I.W.W. national organizers, such as Flynn and Haywood, exercised no

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<sup>1</sup> Socialist Labor Party Daniel DeLeon: The Man and His Work (N.Y. 1934), pp. 131, 151-152, Industrial Union Bulletin April 13, May 25 1907, J. Ebert The Trial of a New Society (Cleveland 1913), D.B. Cole Immigrant City: Lawrence, Massachusetts 1845-1921 (North Carolina, 1963).



formal control over the Committee. Their capacity was purely advisory. The Executive Board appeared less independent of the I.W.W. It was composed entirely of local I.W.W. activists. Even so, I.W.W. national organizers were not represented, and most local followers were Wobblies of recent standing. Although the Executive Board was responsible for day-to-day strike administration, its power was severely restricted. All decisions reached by it, and by the Strike Committee, were referred back to the rank and file for approval.<sup>1</sup>

The strike administration was loose, ad hoc, and later condemned as ineffective by some Wobblies. Analysing the Paterson defeat, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn warned of drawbacks to such administration. The Strike Committee's recommendation of a return to work in August 1913, against the advice of I.W.W. organizers, prompted Miss Flynn to suggest that in future if the I.W.W. "...assumes the responsibility of a strike the I.W.W. should control the strike absolutely through a union strike committee..."<sup>2</sup> Certainly the strike administration did not indicate strict I.W.W. control of strikers. Over the day-to-day functioning of the strike the I.W.W. was incapable of exercising much authority. I.W.W. ideology did not encourage national organizers such as Haywood to issue strike directives. It held that workers were quite capable of managing their own affairs. Moreover Paterson's millworkers were scarcely disciplined trade unionists or experienced in organized stoppages.

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III p. 2457, J. Fitch "The I.W.W., An Outlaw Organization" p. 362.

<sup>2</sup>E.G. Flynn "The Truth About the Paterson Strike" Rebel Voices p. 226.

Not only was the I.W.W. new amongst them, but by habit union organization and discipline was foreign to them. Their immigrant background and deeply entrenched strike traditions suggested that no professional organizer could have hoped to dominate and direct such people.

The disorderly antics so readily adopted by Paterson millhands posed more than a minor problem for the Wobbly organizers. Throughout the dispute, the I.W.W. sought to attribute strike violence to Paterson's municipal authorities. In this way it hoped a concerned and outraged public would demand state or federal intervention, as in Lawrence, and a favourable settlement. There was one major drawback to this strategy: the unpredictability of the strikers. Wobbly organizers were concerned that spontaneous and uncontrolled acts of violence by millhands would undo their work.

Passive resistance was the I.W.W. answer to municipal aggression. "Go on the picket line and keep your hands in your pockets", Haywood advised strikers. "Your power is in your folded arms".<sup>1</sup> Although some I.W.W. leaders threatened acts of sabotage few were keen to be taken seriously. Flynn noted the limited value of inflammatory suggestion: "Physical violence is dramatic....it's especially dramatic when you talk about it and don't resort to it".<sup>2</sup> Both she and Haywood

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<sup>1</sup>F.S. Boyd "The General Strike in the Silk Industry" Paterson Pageant pp.4-5.

<sup>2</sup>Flynn "The Truth About The Paterson Strike" p. 218.



were experienced campaigners; too experienced to seriously consider violent resistance. It could only alienate public support for the silkworkers. The I.W.W.'s hold over the strikers was far from secure. It had to be wary of creating a situation in which it would sacrifice control of the dispute. The spectre of rampaging millhands could do untold damage. In fact individual acts of violence by strikers were rife throughout the dispute. Significantly local Wobblies were later to admit that their discouragement of violence was usually ignored once millhands took to the streets. Ed Zuersher, Wobbly and Executive Committee delegate, was adamant, in 1914, that "... we never counselled the workers to use any violence". His colleague Adolph Lessig re-iterated the point. But both admitted that the majority usually acted independently of their instruction. Lessig argued that violence "...was done by people on the outside of the organization". His distinction was, however, worthless. The overwhelming majority of the I.W.W. strikers were recent and only temporary union members. In or out of the organization they were wayward and ill-disciplined. Lessig admitted as much when he conceded that "...at times our people were very hostile, in fact, they threatened to become so, and we had a great deal of trouble to hold them in check".<sup>1</sup>

It is testimony to the success of the Wobblies' publicity campaign that acts of violence were largely overlooked in the national press or blamed upon the aggressive attitude of local police officers. As late as May 1913 - three months after the original walkout - an independent observer concluded that

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<sup>1</sup>C.I.R. III pp. 2459, 2463, 2593.



"...considering numbers and duration, this is one of the most peaceful strikes on record".<sup>1</sup> His view was echoed by other journalists. Where local opinion had once bolstered the claims of strikers the I.W.W. now achieved a groundswell of sympathy that was nationwide. John Reed, a young New York newspaperman who coined the phrase, a "War in Paterson", published bitter attacks on the local police and government. A local rabbi wrote a series of articles in national journals bemoaning the "manifest miscarriage of justice" in Paterson. Detached observers reached the same conclusions. "City Officials Adopt Repressive Measures" wrote a correspondent in Survey magazine. Few appear to have disagreed with Reed's famous statement: "There's war in Paterson. But it's a curious kind of war. All the violence is the work of one side - the Mill Owners".<sup>2</sup>

For a time it seemed likely that widespread public concern would force a settlement or compel government intervention. President Wilson was besieged with appeals for federal intervention, from both local and independent organizations. The Socialist Party organized an extensive campaign for a federal investigation similar to that conducted into the Lawrence strike in 1912. Even local businessmen and residents fearful of the I.W.W. pleaded with Wilson to spare their city from the mercies of "The Horde of Anarkists who dominate Paterson, Devils in the form of Labor Leaders".<sup>3</sup> Wilson stood apart, ignoring

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<sup>1</sup>J. Fitch "The I.W.W.: An Outlaw Organization" p. 358.

<sup>2</sup>J. Reed "War in Paterson" pp. 14-16, L. Mannheimer "Darkest New Jersey" Independent 74, May 29 1913 pp.1190-1192, J. Fitch "The I.W.W.: An Outlaw Organization" pp. 355-362, G. Mason "Industrial War in Paterson" pp. 283-287, Anon. "City Officials Adopt Repressive Measures" Survey 30 April 1913

<sup>3</sup>Unsigned letter to Tumulty June 24 1913, Department of

the furore. Unlike Lawrence in 1912, intervention now was unlikely to win or lose votes. In Washington the dispute was simply inconsequential politically.

Even after it became clear that intervention from Washington was unlikely, the I.W.W. policy of mounting public support for a strike settlement remained unchanged. Attempts at arbitration by local clergymen and by the Paterson Board of Aldermen proved fruitless but did not modify I.W.W. attitudes.<sup>1</sup> As long as Chief Bimson and Paterson's city judiciary persisted in arresting and jailing strikers, the I.W.W. maintained its vibrant publicity campaign and held out a chance of success. Each new wave of repression prompted a Wobbly response. When meetings were outlawed in Paterson, the Wobblies held open-air mass gatherings in the adjoining borough of Haledon. The Passaic County Sheriff, assisted by Bimson arrested Haledon's Socialist mayor, William Brueckmann in an attempt to suppress the meetings. The I.W.W. responded with a new appeal to outraged liberals at the suppression of civil liberties.<sup>2</sup> When the I.W.W. was short of funds - tied up in excessive bail requirements - and fearful of flagging strike morale, it hit upon the idea of sending strikers' children to the homes of sympathizers in New Jersey and New York. In response Paterson Mayor Andrew McBride asserted "...Paterson people would take

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Labor Records, R.G. 280, National Archives. This file contains ample evidence of the widespread concern evoked by the strike.

<sup>1</sup> NJBS Thirty Sixth Annual Report 1913 pp. 204-205.

<sup>2</sup> Paterson Guardian July 16, 17 and 19 1913, New York Call July 21 1913.



care of any who needed food", but he need hardly have bothered. Once again the I.W.W. had upstaged the city government. Reporters flocked to city railroad stations to record the departure of innocent strike victims.<sup>1</sup> The death of Valentino Modestino marked an especially interesting example of the I.W.W.'s persuasive powers. Valentino's killing was the direct result of disorder initiated by strikers. The victim was not a union member nor even a silkworker. Yet the Wobblies stage-managed his funeral and produced a chilling spectacle of martyrdom. I.W.W. organizers, heads lowered to a brass band's dirge, led a mass burial procession through the streets of Paterson. Crowds of up to twenty thousand were reported following Valentino's coffin to the graveside and subsequent mass meeting held by the I.W.W.<sup>2</sup>

The Paterson Pageant, more than any other episode, displayed the I.W.W.'s talent for public spectacle, and preserved the strike as a major landmark in U.S. working class history. The unique spectacle of hundreds of ragged millhands performing their strike before the social elite of New York City captured the imagination of people everywhere. It remains the I.W.W.'s supreme propaganda achievement. Ironically the Pageant was planned and directed by a handful of New York intellectuals and dilettantes, associated with Haywood and John Reed, but certainly not strikers or strike organizers. Haywood later

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times April 20, 21, May 7 and 9 1913. Paterson Guardian May 1 1913.

<sup>2</sup>New York Call April 21 and 23 1913, Paterson Guardian April 18 and 21 1913.



confessed the Pageant was suggested to him "at a small gathering in the home of a New York friend of mine".<sup>1</sup> He seized upon the idea, announcing to Paterson's strikers "...we are going to take this strike to New York City".<sup>2</sup> Reed, Bobby Jones, a theatre designer and Mabel Dodge Luhan, a freethinker and patron of the arts from New York's Fifth Avenue, combined to stage the production.<sup>3</sup> Madison Square Garden was hired and strikers diverted from routine picket duty to rehearse.

On the day of the Pageant a mass procession of Paterson silkworkers marched across the Hudson River to publicize the spectacle. A giant lighting arrangement, depicting the initials "I.W.W." blazed from the top of Madison Square Garden. Inside twelve thousand ticketholders and three thousand strikers formed an excited and expectant audience. They were treated to a brass band rendition of the "Marseillaise" followed by six scenes depicting the origin and development of the Paterson strike. Over a thousand millhands re-enacted police clubbing of strikers, the funeral of Valentino, a Haledon mass meeting and the exodus of children from Paterson. They were directed on stage by fiery speeches from Haywood, Flynn and Tresca.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Autobiography of Big Bill Haywood p. 262.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times May 19 1913.

<sup>3</sup>M. Dodge Luhan Intimate Memoirs III: Movers and Shakers (New York, 1936) pp. 188-212, G. Hicks John Reed: The Making of a Revolutionary (New York, 1936) pp. 96-112, J.R. Conlin Big Bill Haywood pp. 86-89, 141-2.

<sup>4</sup>The Pageant of the Paterson Strike pp. 16-17.

The press hailed the Pageant as a remarkable achievement. Both Haywood and the strikers were jubilant. "The success of the Madison Square venture has given new hope to the agitator and fresh courage to the strikers", the New York Times announced. Its rival the Tribune was equally optimistic. It saw in the Pageant evidence of a maturity and discipline amongst Paterson's silkworkers hitherto submerged. "It is gratifying", the paper declared, "to know that strikers have reached that stage of self-control at which they can look at their case objectively and present it to the public with the reasoned calculation of dramatic art".<sup>1</sup> Left-wing sympathizers applauded unreservedly. "The World's Greatest Labor Play" was the description of the International Socialist Review.<sup>2</sup>

The euphoria was quickly dispelled. Although the Pageant attracted ample publicity it was essentially a re-iteration of the I.W.W.'s campaign throughout the strike. It failed to induce state or federal mediation. I.W.W. organizers mistook the novel and favourable atmosphere which had prompted a congressional investigation into Lawrence in 1912 for a general concern with industrial mediation. Haywood had seriously overestimated the influence of I.W.W. tactics. The Wobblies might rail against mighty industrialists and predict uncontrollable violence if a settlement was not reached, but their

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times June 9 1913, New York Tribune June 9 1913.

<sup>2</sup>P. Russell "The World's Greatest Labor Play: The Paterson Strike Pageant" International Socialist Review 13, July 14 1913 pp. 7-9.



message simply hardened local opposition to the strike.

The Pageant raised strikers' hopes and promptly dashed them. It was a financial disaster. Far from raising funds for strike relief the Pageant organizers ran up a sizeable deficit. Charges of mismanagement and corruption were levelled against them.<sup>1</sup> "It is openly charged...that the Paterson strikers have been exploited by the I.W.W.", the New York press reported.<sup>2</sup> The departure to Europe of Reed and Mabel Lodge did little to alleviate doubts. Haywood, exhausted by illness, followed shortly after.<sup>3</sup> Flynn was left to direct strike strategy.

It was an unenviable task. The aftermath of the Pageant revealed widespread dissension amongst Paterson's silkworkers. Jealousy between Pageant participants and strikers forced to remain on picket duty threatened strike solidarity. Picketing had been neglected in the hurried preparations for the Pageant. Flynn, critical of the New York show from its outset, caustically observed: "...the first scabs got into the Paterson mills while the workers were training for the pageant ...." Distraction from their "real work" - the struggle at the point of production - was, in Flynn's view, a major factor in the silkworkers return to work.<sup>4</sup>

In the wake of the Pageant disagreement and blacklegging increased. The strike was never more violent than in its last

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<sup>1</sup>New York Call Letters to editor May 2 and 9, June 9 1913.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times June 24 1913.

<sup>3</sup>The Autobiography of Bill Haywood p. 272.

<sup>4</sup>Flynn "The Truth About The Paterson Strike" p.221.



month. Demoralization and starvation forced many back to the looms. Moreover the I.W.W.'s fragile control of the strike was exposed. Tension between English-speaking workers and recent arrivals, predominantly Italian, broke into open revolt. The older immigrant workers "formed the complicating element in the strike, continually pulling back on the mass through their influence as the English-speaking and their attitude as conservatives".<sup>1</sup> They had reluctantly joined the walkout in March and throughout remained aloof from the mass of Italian strikers. The riots of 1902, in which the English-speaking had vigorously denounced Italian dyeworkers, probably coloured attitudes. Perhaps a similar debacle was feared following the pageant disaster. At any rate the older immigrant groups broke ranks in July 1913 and began a return to work. The I.W.W. was at a loss to stem the tide. It did not control the Strike Committee. With its influence waning it could not prevent a referendum vote in favour of a return.<sup>2</sup> By mid-July Paterson mills were again alive with the clatter of looms and busy fingers.

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<sup>1</sup>ibid. p.216.

<sup>2</sup>Flynn "The Truth About The Paterson Strike" p.224,  
Paterson Guardian July 11 and 18 1913.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

Available sources on Paterson silkworkers, the central focus of this study, are unfortunately sparse. Though vociferous at flashpoints in the city's history, millhands in Paterson remained, for the bulk of the period under study, unorganised and inarticulate. As such few left records of their experience. The structure and composition of the mill workforce can be gleaned from official statistics and publications. Supplementing the published federal censuses are both federal and state unpublished census manuscript schedules. Both are essential for the community and demographic studies central to this research, for they contain information on residence, age, occupation, ethnicity and household structure of the city's workers. The 1880 federal census manuscript schedules were used. Those for 1890 were almost totally destroyed and thus are unavailable for research purposes. The schedules for 1900 have recently become available; but unfortunately too late to be incorporated in this study. The New Jersey state census manuscript schedules were used for the years 1905 and 1915. Although available for the years 1885 and 1895 the state census at this stage neglected to collect much information on the ethnic origins of New Jersey inhabitants and thus was of little value for this research.

The Dillingham (Immigration) Commission Reports vol. XI contains essential material on the European background of Paterson millhands and is an important adjunct to census data. Likewise trade directories, and city histories, especially for the early years of Paterson's silk industry, contain a glut of information on size of enterprises, number of employees and levels of technology in individual plants. Bulletin's Handbook of Silk Manufacturers, L.P. Brockett's The Silk Industry in America, W. Clayton and W. Nelson History of Bergen and Passaic Counties, A.H. Heusser The History of the Silk Dyeing Industry, are leading examples of local contemporary publications intended to promote the success of



local manufacturers, but not to be disregarded for that fact.

Disappointingly no extant company records were discovered or located. It was hoped that schedules of employees and payrolls would reveal much on the turnover of the workforce within mills, on the problems of industrial discipline within individual plants, on the ethnic structure of mill workforces and on kinship patterns within plants. Searches for company records at local and state depositories proved fruitless as did enquiries at the business records centre, Harvard University.

Trade journals such as The American Silk Journal and Textile America contain a fund of information on the interests and plans of local manufacturers. Both reflect Paterson millowners' prevalent discontent and provide illuminating insights into the reaction of manufacturers during periods of upheaval in the silk industry.

In all the above, Paterson silkworkers remain, for the most part, faceless and nameless. Organization was always weak amongst millhands and few union records remain. The most dedicated activist amongst Paterson workingmen was J.P. McDonnell. His personal papers, and above all, the Paterson Labor Standard edited in Paterson by McDonnell for almost thirty years, provide important documentation on some aspects of Paterson's industrial history. The Labor Standard illustrates local industrial disputes, especially for the years 1876-1884. Hereafter its coverage of the local scene is selective, as increasingly its columns reflected McDonnell's efforts to influence the state legislature. McDonnell's personal papers document the work of the New Jersey Federation of Labor throughout the 1880's and 1890's. Containing correspondence from both local and state figures, reports of McDonnell's work on the State Board of Arbitration, and press clippings and diaries relating to McDonnell's work, they proved a useful supplement to the Labor Standard.



Aside from the Labor Standard and trade journals, sources on labor relations are confined almost exclusively to the local Paterson press. The Socialist Labor Party's Papers and its weekly journal The People provide coverage of the years 1894-1898 in support of Alderman Matt Maguire's reform efforts in Paterson. The Paterson branch of the party also ran a local journal, the Paterson People, edited by Maguire, for a short time during the 1890's. It is available for the years 1894-95.

The national notoriety achieved by the city's anarchists found expression during the period 1900-02 in a host of newspapers and journals. Freiheit, the anarchist publication directed by Johann Most, is a useful source on this period, particularly for the strike of 1902. Local Italian anarchists published their own paper, La Questione Sociale. Unfortunately copies only survive for the years 1895-97.

Sources on Paterson's immigrants are scattered. The national and state census remain the single most important starting point for composing a picture of the city's changing immigrant communities. The Dillingham Commission, although directing its attention to post 1890 period is similarly essential. For the early arrival of Englishmen, British newspapers were used. The local Macclesfield press provided regular accounts of emigrating weavers to Silk City. Parliamentary papers contain background on the home silk industry and the conditions which prompted the emigration of both weavers and silk manufacturers. So close were ties between English weavers in Paterson and their homeland that a number of British visitors to the city recorded their impression of work and social life in the New World. Thomas Greenwood's A Tour of the United States and Joseph Wright's A Centennial Tour of the United States and Canada contain illuminating chapters on silk work in the city and the new work ethic confronting European immigrants.

Italian immigration to Paterson assumed importance during the 1890's, and like the British was closely linked to a declining home industry. The Italian silk industry is well documented in a number of economic histories of Italy. Maria Hall Ets' Rosa, an account of a young girl's work in the rural mills of northern Italy in the late nineteenth century, is the most illuminating source on the work experience and expectations of emigrating weavers. Robert Foerster's The Italian Emigration of Our Times remains, despite being written in 1919, the classic work on the Italian emigration of this period. Much of the character of Italian immigration to Paterson can be gleaned from the local press particularly during the period of the "Red Scare" in the city when attempts were made to pinpoint and dissect the Italian community by inquisitive journalists. Carlo Altarelli's "History and Present Condition of The Italian Colony of Paterson", written in 1911, is a useful contemporary account of Italians in the city, but probably less illuminating than a careful perusal of local press accounts of court hearings, industrial and housing conditions. The Commission on Industrial Relations, III contains a wealth of material on Italian's work and social conditions at the time of the 1913 uproar.

Numerous other immigrant groups were attracted to Paterson, although none, apart from the British, assumed the singular importance of the Italians. Prior to the twentieth century it was more often than not the English who took the lead in organizing and leading strikes. Irish immigrants, although important numerically and politically in the city, never approached the influence of the English in the silk industry. As the census makes clear, Irish menfolk, having no background in silk weaving, tended to seek their fortunes in the city's iron and locomotive shops, leaving the mills to their wives and children.



Germans and Dutch were other significant groups of newcomers. Germans, mainly from silk communities in the homeland were prominent in all branches of the textile trade in Paterson. In contrast the Dutch, often rural folk, were employed mostly as laborers in the city's dyeshops. Although both groups could be relied on to join strikes and demonstrations neither was singled out as strike leaders or troublemakers. Like the British and Irish, the Germans and Dutch formed their own distinct neighbourhoods in Paterson, signified by ethnic churches, halls, fraternal clubs and newspapers, and in time, political influence. Unfortunately only sparse attention was paid to them in the local press and contemporary publications. None of their ethnic journals have been preserved.

East European Jews, aside from Italians, were the only other major group of "new" immigrants attracted to Paterson in large numbers following the 1890's depression. The host of other newcomers from southern and eastern Europe, so common in other American industrial centres, were notable in Paterson by their absence. By the time of the 1913 strike Jews were well established in the silk trade, although their arrival was very recent. The Immigration Commission dates their earliest arrival in the city at 1902, and many more must have followed after the upheavals and pogroms in Eastern Europe during the first decade of the new century. In 1913 they had as yet no political influence and scarcely identifiable communities. Indeed the strike brought them, as a group, to a new social prominence in the city. Their presence is best identified through census data, but little else is available, prior to 1913, to document the adaption and growth of this newest immigrant group to the city.



The municipal history of Paterson is contained in a variety of local histories. W.W. Clayton and W. Nelson's History of Bergen and Passaic Counties and C. Shriner's Paterson, New Jersey, are voluminous accounts of the development of nineteenth century Paterson. Both Nelson and Shriner were local men; avid historians and antiquarians. Their joint work History of Paterson and Its Environs supplements their earlier efforts. Many of the city's municipal records for the nineteenth century were destroyed by fire in 1902; however the Annual Reports of the City Officers are available for the whole period studied. These contain annual reports by the mayor and heads of all the major municipal departments. They contain essential information on the social composition of the city's municipal servants, particularly the Paterson Police Department.

The intricacies of local machine politics can only be grasped from a careful perusal of the Paterson press. State publications, such as the annual New Jersey Legislative Manual, feature useful information on the social background of local political figures, but the grass roots ties and influences operating on machine politicians are most clearly evident in press accounts of election meetings and the sittings of the Paterson Board of Aldermen.

On the national movement for civic reform there is a glut of material. Richard Hofstadter's Age of Reform is the most useful starting point, but the important correctives of James Weinstein The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State and Samuel Hays "The Changing Political Structure of the City in Industrial America" Journal of Urban History 1974 must also be consulted. Reform in New Jersey is dealt with in Ransom Noble's New Jersey Progressivism Before Wilson although this work throws little light on the origins of the movement in Paterson.

J. Buancker's article "Urban, New-Stock Liberalism and Progressive Reform in New Jersey" New Jersey History 1969 contains several interesting references to Paterson reformers, but again skirts around the movement for commission government in the city. The origins of the reform movement in Paterson remain hazy. No extant papers of local reform groups were available. The efforts of leading figures are well documented in the local press, particularly during elections preceding the reform bills of 1906 and 1907. Working class opposition to city commissions figures prominently in the local press and McDonnell's National Labor Standard. For local millowners' support of the movement see the local Board of Trade's Paterson. The immediate effects of commission rule are again evident from a review of local journals, but the unpublished report of the Commission on Industrial Relations by P.F. Gill and R.S. Brennan "Report on the Inferior Courts and Police of Paterson, N.J." are of singular importance. Details of commission rule of the Paterson Police Department are amply furnished in the Annual Reports of the City Officers of Paterson 1908-1913.

The 1913 Strike is well documented in a number of specialist histories of the Industrial Workers of the World. Graham Adams Jr.'s Age of Industrial Violence features the strike from the standpoint of the Commission on Industrial Relations. Joyce Kornbluh's Rebel Voices contains a number of important documents relating to the strike. Unfortunately all these accounts have treated the strike as an aspect of a general history of the I.W.W. The focus of this study, although markedly different from that of earlier accounts of the 1913 strike, did not require the use of notably different sources from these earlier versions. Reports III of the Commission on Industrial Relations remains the single most important document. It was supplemented by the

previously untapped and unpublished reports of the Commission, which are available in the National archives, Washington D.C. The local press was used extensively (earlier historians of the strike have concentrated upon the national and radical press) for a commentary on the strikers per se. The Annual Reports of the City Officers of Paterson for 1913 and 1914 contain the local administration's position vis. the strike. These should be consulted in conjunction with the New Jersey Bureau of Labor Statistics' Annual Reports 1913 and 1914. The Rose Pastor Stokes Papers contain the "Patrick Quinlan Defense" File relating to the persecution of local radicals in the years immediately following the strike. Walter Licht's unpublished paper "Young Immigrant Workers in Revolt" presents essential information concerning the ethnic origins of arrested activists during the strike. This latter data was taken from official police records which were unavailable to this author.



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## APPENDICES

# APPENDIX 1

## Ethnic Structure of the 3rd Ward 1905-1915

		1905 100=603	1915 100=679
New Jersey		11.8 = 15.4	13.0 = 16.8
U.S.		3.6	3.8
Irish	F.b.	1.7 = 3.5	0.6 = 3.4
	N.b.	1.8	2.8
English/	F.b.	3.3 = 7.3	1.6 = 4.5
Scottish	N.b.	4.0	2.9
German	F.b.	7.5 = 17.5	5.7 = 9.5
	N.b.	10.0	3.8
Italian	F.b.	9.1 = 12.3	12.5 = 24.4
	N.b.	3.2	11.9
Dutch	F.b.	9.5 = 20.3	5.7 = 14.1
		10.8	8.4
Others	N.b.	14.4 = 24.0	15.2 = 27.1
	F.b.	9.6	11.9

(Source: New Jersey State Census 1905 and 1915)

## APPENDIX 2

### Ethnic Structure of the 9th Ward 1905-1915

		1905 100=534	1915 100=553
New Jersey		21.7	21.2
U.S.		3.7 = 25.4	1.1 = 22.3
Irish	N.b.	8.6	6.3
	N.b.	10.9 = 19.5	13.4 = 19.7
English/	F.b.	11.8	4.9
Scottish	N.b.	9.0 = 20.8	6.5 = 11.4
German	F.b.	4.5	2.4
	N.b.	4.5 = 9.0	3.8 = 6.2
Italian	F.b.	7.3	13.7
	N.b.	5.6 = 12.9	14.3 = 28.0
Others	F.b.	5.3	6.1
	N.b.	7.0 = 12.3	6.1 = 12.2

(Source: New Jersey State Census 1905 and 1915)



# APPENDIX 3

## Ethnic Structure of the 2nd Ward 1905-1915

		1905 . . . 100=704	1915 . . . 100=829
New Jersey U.S.		26.7 6.1 = 32.8	26.9 3.9 = 30.8
Irish	F.b. N.b.	3.8 6.5 = 10.3	2.7 4.1 = 6.8
British	F.b. N.b.	11.2 8.0 = 19.2	7.1 8.8 = 15.9
German	F.b. N.b.	6.0 9.8 = 15.8	6.2 7.4 = 13.6
Italian	F.b. N.b.	4.3 1.1 = 5.4	6.6 6.8 = 13.4
Others	F.b. N.b.	10.5 5.7 = 16.2	9.8 9.8 = 19.6

(Source: New Jersey State Census 1905 and 1915)

# APPENDIX 4

## Ethnic Structure of 8th Ward 1905-1915

		1905 . . . 100=393 . . . . .	1915 . . . . . 100=430 .
New Jersey		15.0	31.6
U.S.		1.8 = 16.8	2.1 = 33.7
Irish	F.b.	15.5	4.4
	N.b.	20.9 = 36.4	12.1 = 16.5
English/	N.b.	10.2	6.0
Scottish	F.b.	6.4 = 16.6	5.3 = 11.3
German	N.b.	6.1	3.5
	F.b.	6.4 = 12.5	5.3 = 8.8
Italian	N.b.	2.8	6.5
	F.b.	1.3 = 4.1	7.2 = 13.7
Others	N.b.	9.0	7.8
	F.b.	4.6 = 13.6	7.9 = 15.7

(Source: New Jersey State Census 1905 and 1915)

# APPENDIX 5

## Ethnic Structure 5th Ward 1905-1915

		1905	100=343	1915	100=360
New Jersey		32.9	= 46.9	33.3	= 50.0
U.S.		14.0		16.7	
Irish	F.b.	4.4	= 8.8	2.2	= 9.1
	N.b.	4.4		6.9	
British	F.b.	11.1	= 24.2	11.7	= 22.5
	N.b.	13.1		10.8	
German	F.b.	1.5	= 5.9	0.8	= 5.2
	N.b.	4.4		4.4	
Italian	F.b.	0.3	= 0.3	0.8	= 0.8
	N.b.	-		-	
Others	F.b.	6.7	= 13.7	7.3	= 12.1
	N.b.	7.0		4.8	

(Source: New Jersey State Census 1905 and 1915)



# APPENDIX 6

## Occupational Structure of the Ninth Ward 1905-1915

	1905	100=534	1915	100=553
Silk	15.5		14.8	
Dyer's Helper	-		0.2	
Jute	0.2		-	
Flax	1.7		0.2	
Garment	1.3		0.5	
Metal/Machine	6.6		3.1	
Self	5.1		3.4	
White Collar	3.4		5.2	
Professional	2.1		0.9	
Skilled	7.7		7.6	
Unskilled	4.7		8.1	
Not working	51.7		56.0	

## Occupational Structure of the Working Population of the 9th Ward 1905-1915

	1905	100=257	1915	100=243
Silk	32.3	83	33.7	82
Dyer's Helper	-	-	0.4	1
Jute	0.3	1	-	-
Flax	3.5	9	0.4	1
Garment	2.7	7	1.2	3
Metal/Machine	13.6	35	7.0	17
Self	10.5	27	7.8	19
White Collar	7.0	18	11.9	29
Professional	4.3	11	1.6	4
Skilled	16.0	41	17.3	42
Unskilled	9.7	25	18.5	45

(Source: New Jersey State Census 1905 and 1915)

# APPENDIX 7

## Occupational Structure of the 3rd Ward 1905-1915

	1905	100=603	1915	100=679
Silk	13.8		13.1	
Dyer's Helper	5.8		4.0	
Jute	-		0.1	
Flax	-		-	
Garment	1.3		2.7	
Metal/Machine	2.8		1.9	
Self	2.7		2.7	
White Collar	1.7		3.5	
Professional	-		0.9	
Skilled	4.1		4.1	
Unskilled	7.8		9.6	
Not working	60.0		57.4	

## Occupational Structure of the Working Population of the 3rd Ward 1905-1915

	1905	100=241	1915	100=289
Silk	34.4	83	30.8	89
Dyer's Helper	14.5	35	9.3	27
Jute	-	-	0.3	1
Flax	-	-	-	-
Garment	3.3	8	6.2	18
Metal/Machine	7.1	17	4.5	13
Self	6.6	16	6.2	18
White Collar	4.1	10	8.3	24
Professional	-	-	2.1	6
Skilled	10.4	25	9.7	28
Unskilled	19.5	47	22.5	65

(Source: New Jersey State Census 1905 and 1915)

# APPENDIX 8

## Occupational Structure of 8th Ward 1905-1915

	1905	100=393	1915	100=430
Silk	14.8		12.3	
Dyer's Helper	0.3		0.7	
Jute	1.5		0.9	
Flax	4.1		1.2	
Garment	1.0		0.7	
Metal/Machine	5.3		2.1	
Self	3.3		2.8	
White Collar	5.9		5.8	
Professional	0.3		0.2	
Skilled	3.8		5.6	
Unskilled	9.9		11.4	
Not working	49.8		56.3	

## Occupational Structure of the Working Population of the 8th Ward 1905-1915

	1905	100=197	1915	100=188
Silk	29.4	58	28.2	53
Dyer's Helper	0.5	1	1.6	3
Jute	3.0	6	2.1	4
Flax	8.1	16	2.7	5
Garment	2.0	4	1.6	3
Metal/Machine	10.7	21	4.8	9
Self	6.6	13	6.4	12
White Collar	11.7	23	13.3	25
Professional	0.5	1	0.5	1
Skilled	7.6	15	12.8	24
Unskilled	19.8	39	26.1	49

(Source: New Jersey State Census, 1905 and 1915)



## APPENDIX 9

Occupational Structure of 2nd Ward 1905-1915

	1905	1915
Silk	18.2	14.0
Dyer's Helper	0.4	1.6
Jute	-	0.1
Flax	0.3	-
Garment	1.3	1.7
Metal/Machine	4.3	1.8
Self	3.3	3.5
White Collar	4.3	6.3
Professional	0.6	0.6
Skilled	6.8	7.2
Unskilled	3.4	6.0
Not working	57.1	57.2

Occupational Structure of the Working Population of the 2nd Ward 1905-1915

	1905	100=301	1915	100=355
Silk	42.5	128	32.7	116
Dyer's Helper	1.0	3	3.7	13
Jute	-	0	0.3	1
Flax	0.7	2	-	0
Garment	3.0	9	3.9	14
Metal/Machine	10.0	30	4.2	15
Self	7.6	23	8.2	29
White Collar	10.0	30	14.6	52
Professional	1.3	4	1.4	5
Skilled	15.9	48	16.9	60
Unskilled	8.0	24	14.1	50

(Source: New Jersey State Census 1905 and 1915)

# APPENDIX 10

## Structure, Ethnicity, Age and Residence of the Paterson Police Department

### 1900-1915

#### a) Size of Force

1900 = 104

1908 = 143

1913 = 147

#### b) Deployment of Police

	<u>1900</u>	<u>1908</u>	<u>1913</u>
Chief	1	1	1
Captain	1	1	1
Captain of Detectives	-	-	1
Lieutenant	-	-	1
Detective Sergeants	4	4	3
Detectives	-	-	7
Sergeants	12	12	12
Patrolmen	87	103	103
Chief's Secretary	-	1	1
Warrant Officers	-	2	-
Desk Officers	-	3	3
Reserve Officers	-	2	7
Doormen	-	3	-
Court Officers	-	1	-
Truant Officers	-	1	2
Erie Depot Officers	-	1	1
Traffic Officers	-	3	6
Mounted Officers	-	5	-
City Hall Officers	-	-	1

# APPENDIX 10 (Cont'd.)

## c) Ethnicity of Police

			<u>1905</u>	<u>1915</u>	
			<u>Total</u>		
U.S.			17	30	
Irish	F.b.	7			5
	N.b.	22	29	43	38
British	F.b.	4			5
	N.b.	10	14	16	11
German	F.b.	2			2
	N.b.	5	7	12	10
Others	F.b.	2			6
	N.b.	-	2	6	-
			69	107	

(Totals represent numbers for whom personal details could be traced in the 1905 and 1915 State Censuses.)

## d) Ethnicity of Police in 1915: Post-1907 Recruits

U.S.			17	
Irish	F.b.	3		
	N.b.	24	27	
British	F.b.	2		
	N.b.	3	5	
Germans	F.b.	2		
	N.b.	2	4	
Others	F.b.	4		
	N.b.	-	4	
			57	

(Total represents numbers for whom personal details could be traced in the 1905 State Census.)



# APPENDIX 10 (Cont'd.)

## e) Age Structure of the Force in 1913

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Average Age</u>
Pre-1907 Officer	59	49.6 years
Post-1907 Recruits	88	34.1 years

## f) Residence of Police

<u>Ward</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>4th</u>	<u>5th</u>	<u>6th</u>	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>10th</u>	<u>11th</u>
1905	5	9	4	7	8	5	8	9	6	4	4
1915	6	15	7	9	8	-	9	19	9	14	11

## g) Neighbourhood and Kinship Relations of Police 1915

<u>Total</u> <sup>1</sup>	<u>Sharing Residence</u> <sup>2</sup> <u>with Silkworker(s)</u>	<u>Close Neighbour</u> <sup>3</sup> <u>Silkworker(s)</u>	<u>Not Close Neighbour</u> <u>Silkworker(s)</u>
107	42	47	18

1. Number traced in 1915 State Census.
2. Either resident relative/kinfolk silkworker or residence shared/sublet to silkworker.
3. Silkworker living within two houses.

(Source: (for all tables in Appendix 10) New Jersey State Census 1905 and 1915. Annual Report of the City Officers 1900-1901, 1907-1908, 1912-1913)